

# Ronsard's *Hymnes*

A LITERARY AND  
ICONOGRAPHICAL STUDY









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# Ronsard's *Hymnes*

## A LITERARY AND ICONOGRAPHICAL STUDY

by

Philip Ford

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*For Lenore*

## Preface

No man is an island, and no artist lives and works isolated from other art forms. This was particularly true in Renaissance Europe, where poets, humanists, artists, and musicians were expected by their patrons to collaborate in the production of works to celebrate their ruling dynasties.

Despite periods of withdrawal from court life, Ronsard was no exception to this general principle. His poetry was frequently set to music, he inspired and was inspired by painters, and he associated with the most learned men of his century. In order to appreciate his work to the full, it is thus important to set him in his cultural context, to establish the parallels between his methods of composition and those of other contemporary artists, and to assess the reception of his work on his audiences.

In this study of the *Hymnes*, I set out to explore both the literary aspects of Ronsard's poetry and the parallels between his writing and the world of the plastic arts. The visual qualities of his poetry have long been a source of fascination to me. Certain techniques in particular appear central to his manner of composition: the use of descriptive details to suggest through their symbolism precise interpretations of a text; the inclusion of apparently irrelevant scenes, which act as parallels to the main theme of a poem; and the strongly architectural principles which appear to be at work in the structure of individual poems and collections of poems. I hope to show that underlying these techniques, as was often the case in the visual arts, can be found the philosophical principles of Neo-Platonism. As this would suggest, Ronsard's text is a highly allusive one, containing multiple layers of meaning which only really emerge from an intertextual reading of it.



Such a reading can add to and complement the visual and philosophical aspects of the poetry.

Although the days when scholars could query the extent of Ronsard's knowledge of the Greek language and literature have long since passed, the question of whether or not he paid more than lip service to Neo-Platonism remains more controversial. I have become convinced that Ronsard, like many of his humanist contemporaries, did subscribe to a Neo-Platonizing form of Christianity, and that his view of pagan literature was very much colored by this outlook. This, I believe, has important implications for the way in which we read his works: allegorical interpretations, in line with traditional philosophical exegesis, will be of considerable importance, particularly when applied to poetry in the grand style involving the extensive use of myth; his vision of the world will have a strongly syncretist basis, reconciling the Christian and Platonic approaches; and Platonic harmony will be a vital organizational principle in the structure of his works. I shall illustrate and develop these ideas in the course of this study using examples from the visual arts both to demonstrate these principles in a graphic way, and to suggest that their acceptance was not simply confined to a small intellectual elite. Indeed, in many cases, the use of these principles in the visual arts of the Italian High Renaissance and their transmission through influential Italian artists during the reign of Francis I appear to have preceded their appearance in Ronsard's poetry, pointing to their general acceptance in the prestigious world of the French court.

I should like to record here a debt of gratitude to a number of Renaissance scholars whose writings have inspired my own work. Dorothy Gabe Coleman, who died in 1993, was a source of considerable inspiration to me in her close reading of texts and her numerous demonstrations of the importance of textual allusion for a full understanding of Renaissance writers. I am indebted to another Cambridge colleague, Gillian Jondorf, from whose meticulous gaze and wisdom the early chapters of this book benefited. Among those who have worked in depth on Ronsard, Terence Cave's writings have been a constant source of stimulation, as have those of Jean Céard, Guy Demerson, Gilbert Gadoffre, Germaine Lefeuille, Daniel Ménager, and, more recently, Doranne Fenoaltea and Roberto Campo.

Finally, I should like to record my thanks to Girton College, where I spent a very happy year as a research bye-fellow in 1977-78



and started working on Ronsard, and to the British Academy, who provided me with a grant in 1985 to work in Paris on some of the iconographical aspects of this work.

PJF



## *Abbreviations*

**A**ll references to Ronsard's works are to the *Œuvres complètes*, edited by Paul Laumonier, and revised and completed by Isidore Silver and Raymond Lebègue, 20 vols. (Paris: Hachette, Droz, Marcel Didier, 1914-75), abbreviated as L, and followed by volume number (in roman numerals), page number (in arabic numerals), and, where applicable, line number.

<i>BHR</i>	<i>Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance</i>
<i>GB-A</i>	<i>Gazette des Beaux-Arts</i>
<i>JWCI</i>	<i>Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes</i>
<i>MLR</i>	<i>Modern Language Review</i>
<i>THR</i>	<i>Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance</i>
<i>TLF</i>	<i>Textes Littéraires Français</i>



## CHAPTER 1

# Introduction

But Simonides calls painting "silent poetry" and poetry "talking painting." For literature relates and sets down as having happened the same events that painters represent as happening. And the colours and shapes of the painters and the words and expressions of the writers make manifest the same things; they differ in material and manner of imitation, but they both have the same goal.<sup>1</sup>

(Plutarch, *Moralia* 346f.)

The notion *ut pictura poesis* was well established long before Horace embodied it in its most concise form in his *Ars poetica*.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the Renaissance, the arts of painting and poetry were considered to be engaged in virtually identical pursuits, and because the ancient world had left a considerable corpus of writings on the nature of poetry and rhetoric, and little on the subject of painting, critical theory concerning the visual arts tended to use rhetorical nomenclature.<sup>3</sup> Renaissance theoreticians such as Ludovico Dolce used terms such as *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, and even *pronuntiatio* to describe the activity of the painter, and Aristotelian ideas from the *Poetics* were later applied to the depiction of his-

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<sup>1</sup> Translated by D. A. Russell in *Ancient Literary Criticism: The Principal Texts in New Translations*, ed. D. A. Russell and M. Winterbottom (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ars poetica*, 361. For a discussion of the ancient credentials of the idea and a brief consideration of its *Nachleben*, see C. O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry: The "Ars Poetica"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 368-71.

<sup>3</sup> On this subject, see Rensselaer W. Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1967).

torical and mythological scenes.<sup>4</sup> However, the traffic was not entirely in one direction, and Renaissance poets often drew inspiration in their works from the world of painting.<sup>5</sup>

Links of this kind have been recognized by scholars in a number of sixteenth-century French poets;<sup>6</sup> among these writers, Ronsard must be considered one of the most pictorial and visual in his manner of composition, something which has important repercussions for our approach to reading his poetry.<sup>7</sup> His imagery must frequently be interpreted in an iconographical as well as in a literary sense, whether he is actually purporting to describe a painting or other artifact, or whether he is depicting a scene or events with no direct connection with the visual arts. Within his extensive corpus of poetry, the *Hymnes* in particular offer a wide range of examples in which vis-

<sup>4</sup> Dolce's *Dialogo della pittura intitolato l'Aretino*, which discusses such matters, was first printed in Venice in 1557. For further details concerning the application of literary theory to painting, see Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis*, *passim*.

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of this aspect of the question in an English context, see Jean H. Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958); and Lucy Gent, *Picture and Poetry 1560-1620: Relations between Literature and the Visual Arts in the English Renaissance* (Leamington Spa: James Hall, 1981).

<sup>6</sup> For such connections between poetry and art, see, for example, Marcel Raymond, *La Poésie française et le maniérisme 1546-1610(?)* (London: University of London Press, 1971); Claude-Gilbert Dubois, *Le Maniérisme* (Paris: PUF, 1979); François Joukovsky, *Le Bel Objet: les paradis artificiels de la Pléiade* (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1991); and the excellent study on Renaissance portraiture by François Lecercle, *La Chimère de Zeuxis: Portrait poétique et portrait peint en France et en Italie à la Renaissance*, Études littéraires françaises, 26 (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1987).

<sup>7</sup> On thematic connections between specific paintings and Ronsard poems, see Raymond Lebègue, "Un thème ovidien traité par Le Primatice et par Ronsard," *GB-A* 55 (1960), 301-6; R. A. Sayce, "Ronsard and Mannerism: The *Élégie à Janet*," *L'Esprit Créateur* 6 (1966), 234-47; Philip Ford, "Ronsard et l'emploi de l'allégorie dans le *Second Livre des Hymnes*," *BHR* 43 (1981), 89-106. For a more general discussion, see Jean Adhémar, "Ronsard et l'école de Fontainebleau," *BHR* 20 (1958), 344-48; M. Gerard Davis, "Colour in Ronsard's Poetry," *MLR* 40 (1945), 95-103; Gilbert Gadoffre, *Ronsard* (Paris: Seuil, 1994); Brian Barron, "Ut Pictura Poesis: un lieu commun de la Renaissance et son importance dans l'œuvre de Ronsard" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1981); Margaret McGowan, *Ideal Forms in the Age of Ronsard* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); and Claude-Gilbert Dubois, "Motifs sculpturaux et décoratifs dans la poésie amoureuse (Recueil de 1552-3)," in *Ronsard in Cambridge: Proceedings of the Cambridge Ronsard Colloquium 10-12 April 1985*, ed. Philip Ford and Gillian Jondorf (Cambridge: Cambridge French Colloquia, 1986), 12-25.



ual imagery is central, not least because in these poems, for the most part dedicated to the rich and influential, Ronsard is conscious of competing with plastic artists for both social status and financial reward. In addition, the *Hymnes* represent Ronsard's most successful venture into the area of high art. If his perennially popular love poetry is seen as offering a parallel with the fine portraits of the French Renaissance, the *Hymnes* may be considered the equivalent of the heroic frescoes which decorate Renaissance palaces, celebrating and immortalizing the poet's patrons, and projecting a grand vision of France under the Valois. Consequently, it is on these poems that this study concentrates.

As an habitué of the French court, Ronsard would have been exposed to the works of many of the foremost artists in Europe. Francis I's role in attracting renowned Italian artists to France and amassing an impressive collection of both ancient and modern works of art is well known,<sup>8</sup> and if his successor, Henry II, was not an enthusiastic patron of literature, he nevertheless continued his father's work in the visual arts. By the time of the death of François in 1547, the newly expanded palace of Fontainebleau was decorated with frescoes and easel paintings by resident artists such as Rosso Fiorentino and Primaticcio, in addition to housing an important collection of pictures by Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Andrea del Sarto, Bronzino, Giulio Romano, and many others. Moreover, Ronsard seems to have been on good terms with a number of artists. He addresses François Clouet in the *Elegie à Janet peintre du roi* (L. VI. 152–60) and in sonnet 208 of *Les Amours* ("Telle qu'elle est, dedans ma souvenance . . .," L. V. 154–55); Nicolas Denisot, the poet/painter, is mentioned in a number of poems (usually under the anagrammatic pseudonym "le Conte d'Alcinoys"; cf. L. III. 189, *Les Bacchantales ou le folaterrissime voyage d'Hercueil*, and L. IV. 13–14, "Le plus toffu d'un solitaire boys"); the architect Pierre Lescot is addressed in friendly terms in an elegy (L. X. 300–307); and two years before his death, Ronsard mentions Corneille de Lyon with approval in a speech to Henry III (L. XVIII. 470–79).

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Anthony Blunt, *Art and Architecture in France, 1500–1700*, 4th edition (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1980), and two articles by Jean Adhémar: "The Collection of Paintings of Francis I," *GBA* 30 (1946), 5–16; and "Aretino: Artistic Adviser to Francis I," *JWCI* 17 (1954), 311–18.

In addition to seeing important original works of art at first hand, Ronsard would also have had the opportunity of looking at copies and engravings, sometimes executed by artists who were eminent in their own right. Since Francis I was unable to acquire original works of ancient sculpture from Italy, he had bronze copies made of works such as the Laocoön, the Venus of Cnidus, and the Apollo Belvedere. Benvenuto Cellini relates in his autobiography how in 1543 "Bologna the painter [Primaticcio] . . . suggested to the King that it would be well if his Majesty sent him to Rome with letters of recommendation to the end that he might cast the foremost masterpieces of antiquity, namely the Laocoön, the Cleopatra [in fact, a sleeping Ariadne], the Venus, the Commodus [Hercules], the Zingara, and the Apollo."<sup>9</sup> Michelangelo's *Leda and the Swan* was copied by Rosso and hung for many years at Fontainebleau, and there were no doubt other painted copies of Renaissance works at hand. In addition, Ronsard would probably have had the opportunity of examining the numerous drawings of contemporary paintings which artists like Primaticcio and Rosso would have made in Italy, quite apart from the engravings of such works which, increasingly, were being printed.

Artists had not been slow to realize the possibilities presented by the new technology of the printing press, and engravings began to flourish in the final quarter of the fifteenth century. While many engravers were original artists, or *peintres/graveurs*, others were content either to copy or to model their compositions on other artists, bringing to a general public motifs from works which would otherwise have been inaccessible. Thus, engravers like Marcantonio Raimondi (c. 1480–c. 1530), Marco Dente da Ravenna (d. 1527), Agostino de' Musi (fl. 1514–1536), and Giorgio Ghisi (1520–1582) helped popularize the works of the foremost Italian artists such as Raphael, Michelangelo, Andrea del Sarto, Giulio Romano, and Bronzino.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *The Life of Benvenuto Cellini*, translated by John Addington Symonds (Geneva: Heron Books, 1968), bk. 2, chap. 37. The copies of these sculptures are still to be found in the palace of Fontainebleau.

<sup>10</sup> For details concerning engraving at this time, see Arthur M. Hind, *A Short History of Engraving and Etching for the Use of Collectors and Students*, 2nd edition (London, 1911); Adam von Bartsch, *The Illustrated Bartsch* (New York: Abaris, 1979–); Henri Zerner, *The School of Fontainebleau: Etchings and Engravings* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969); and *The French Renaissance in Prints from the Bibliothèque Nationale de France* (Los Angeles: Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts,



French engravers such as Jean Duvet (1495–c. 1561), Nicolas Beatrixet (c. 1515–1560), and Jean Mignon (1500–1556) also helped the dissemination of Italian art, especially of designs by Michelangelo. In addition, it was quite common for popular paintings and designs to be reproduced on a whole range of artifacts, from maiolica plates and dishes, to armor, silverware, and fireplaces (for example, the Actaeon and Diana fireplace, now in the Château d'Écouen, based either on a lost drawing by Luca Penni, or on Jean Mignon's engraving of the drawing, *La Métamorphose d'Actéon* [figs. 1 and 2]).<sup>11</sup> As a result, Ronsard, who apart from two periods spent in Scotland as a youth and a trip to Haguenau seems to have travelled remarkably little outside his native country, must nevertheless have come into contact with many works of art, at least in reproduction.

Certainly, there are a number of allusions to paintings, both real and imaginary, in Ronsard's works. As early as the ode *A son licé* (L. I. 257–59), there is a reference to a painting of Mars and Venus, while much later on in his career, as Lebègue demonstrates, Primaticcio (fig. 3) provided the inspiration for *Le Satyre* (L. XV. 67–76).<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the *ekphrasis*, or detailed description of a work of art, often inserted into a longer narrative poem, was a device which Ronsard frequently exploited. Another early ode, *Des Peintures contenues dedans un tableau* (L. I. 259–64) purports to describe a complicated allegorical painting concerning the rivalry between the Holy Roman Emperor and successive French monarchs.<sup>13</sup> The painting as a whole is almost certainly imaginary, although the description of Vulcan's forge, in addition to having a Virgilian source, may well have

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UCLA, 1994). See also, *The Engravings of Giorgio Ghisi*, introduction and entries by Suzanne Boorsch, Catalogue Raisonné by Michal R. E. Tewes (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, c. 1984).

<sup>11</sup> On the relationship between the fireplace and the drawing and engraving, see *The French Renaissance in Prints from the Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, pp. 280–82.

<sup>12</sup> See Lebègue, "Un thème ovidien. . . ."

<sup>13</sup> See Philip Ford, "Ronsard the Painter: A Reading of *Des Peintures contenues dedans un tableau*," *French Studies* 40 (1986), 32–44, and also "La Fonction de l'*ekphrasis* chez Ronsard," in *Ronsard en son IV<sup>e</sup> centenaire: l'art de poésie*, edited by Yvonne Bellenger et al. (Geneva: Droz, 1989), 81–89. The ode in question has been the subject of some scholarly interest in recent years; see in particular Patricia Eichel, "Quand le poète-fictor devient pictor . . .," *BHR* 53 (1991), 619–43, and Roberto E. Campo, "The Arts in Conflict in Ronsard's *Des Peintures contenues dedans un tableau*," *Romance Quarterly* 39 (1992), 411–24.

been inspired by a Primaticcio painting in the Cabinet du Roi at Fontainebleau (fig. 4).<sup>14</sup> This is an early example of many such descriptions in Ronsard's works, not only of paintings, but also of scenes depicted on armor, flower baskets, cups, guitars and lutes, and even shepherds' crooks.

However, it is but a small step from the description of an imaginary work of art to the description of a scene which claims no model in the visual arts but which nevertheless uses the same techniques as in the ecphrasis. A number of Ronsard's mythological poems, for example, contain details of scenery or imagery which at first sight appear entirely gratuitous, but which are in fact relevant to the main theme of the poem, in as much as they contribute to our understanding of its meaning just as the decorative elements of a mannerist painting can help us towards a complete iconographical interpretation. This is hardly surprising, since Ronsard's talents as court poet were often called upon, in collaboration with court painters, to provide themes for triumphal entries, masks, and other courtly celebrations.<sup>15</sup> Just as a knowledge of the literary allusions in Ronsard is necessary for a full understanding of his poetry, so too must we be prepared to consider descriptive elements in his poems in terms of the symbolic value which such motifs embodied in contemporary painting.

But how far can the analogy between painting and poetry be taken in Ronsard's writing? To what extent is he himself aware of following a method of composition similar to that of the visual artist?

On a superficial level, the comparison between the two activities is never far from Ronsard's mind. He makes frequent use of the verb *peindre* in a metaphorical sense to refer to the activity of the poet.

<sup>14</sup> The painting no longer exists, but there is a drawing of it by Primaticcio in the Louvre, reproduced in *Fontainebleau: l'art en France (1528-1610)* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1973), 24, and also in H. and C. Weber's edition of *Les Amours* (Paris: Garnier, 1963), opposite p. 92. However, the theme was a popular one, being painted in 1536, for example, by the Flemish artist Maarten van Heemskerck, now in the Narodni Gallery, Prague. The engraving on a similar theme, illustrated in fig. 4, is by Master LD.

<sup>15</sup> On this subject, see, for example, Frances Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977), part 3, and J. T. D. Hall, "Ronsard et les fêtes de cour en 1570," *BHR* 35 (1973), 73-77.

For example, alluding to Simonides' idea of painting as "silent poetry" and poetry as "talking painting," Ronsard wrote in an ode to René d'Urvoi:

Ma peinture n'est pas mue  
Mais vive, & par l'univers  
Guindée en l'air se remue  
De sus l'engin de mes vers.

Aujourd'hui faut que j'ataigne  
Au parfait de mon art beau,  
Urvoi m'a dit que je paigne  
Ses vertus en ce tableau.

(L. II. 148-49. 5-12)

(My painting is not dumb but alive and, lifted up on high, moves through the universe on the wit of my poetry. Today I must reach the perfection of my fine art; d'Urvoi has told me to paint his virtues in this picture.)

Or in the *Complainte contre Fortune*, in the definitive 1567 version, he wrote:

C'est à vous, mon Odet, à qui je me veux pleindre,  
Et comme en un tableau ma fortune vous peindre. . . .

(L. X. 16. 1-2)

(It is to you, my dear Odet, that I wish to complain, and to paint for you my fortune as if in a picture. . . .)

One could cite many similar examples.<sup>16</sup> However, in *L'Hymne de l'Hyver*, first published in 1563, Ronsard makes a more significant comparison between the two arts. Speaking of the ability of the *poeta/vates* to discover philosophical and metaphysical truths, he writes:

Puis afin que le peuple ignorant ne mesprise  
La verité cognue apres l'avoir apprise,  
D'un voile bien subtil (comme les peintres font

<sup>16</sup> In particular, see L. VIII. 9. 85, L. XV. 252. 424, L. XV. 374. 88, and L. XVII. 376. 9.



Aux tableaux animez) luy couvre tout le front,  
 Et laisse seulement tout au travers du voile  
 Paroistre ses rayons, comme une belle estoille,  
 A fin que le vulgaire ait desir de chercher  
 La couverte beauté dont il n'ose approcher.

Tel j'ay tracé cet hymne, imitant l'exemplaire  
 Des fables d'Hesiodé & de celles d'Homere.

(L. XII. 71. 71-80)

(Then, lest the ignorant common folk scorn acknowledged truth after learning it, he covers the whole of its exterior with a subtle veil [as painters do in lifelike pictures], and only allows its rays to appear through the veil, like a beautiful star, so that the common people desire to search for the concealed beauty which they dare not approach. In this way I have sketched out this hymn, following the example of the myths of Hesiod and those of Homer.)

In other words, just as a skilful painter can make his subject more alluring by half concealing, half revealing it through the use of a veil, so the poet can achieve a similar effect by the recourse to mythology.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, given the allegorical nature of so many contemporary paintings, it is likely that in alluding to a veil Ronsard is also thinking of the symbolic quality of these works. In the unfinished *Hinne de Monsieur Saint Roch*, referring to a painting of the saint, Ronsard writes, "Mais lisons ce Tableau & voyons qu'il veut dire" (L. XVIII. 282. 51), a clear indication that he regarded the contemplation of a picture as an intellectual as well as a purely aesthetic exercise. Indeed, he had only to look at the works of art produced for the French court at Fontainebleau to be confronted with highly elaborate allegorical paintings surrounded by equally detailed and exuberant stucco *inquadrate*. Thus, if the comparison between poetry and painting is more than a hollow metaphor, some fruitful conclusions will emerge if we consider how Ronsard may have been following, *mutatis mutandis*, the practice of Renaissance artists in writing narrative and descriptive poetry.

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<sup>17</sup> See my paper "Ronsard and Homeric Allegory," in *Ronsard in Cambridge*, 40-53.

One important lesson concerns the use of imagery. In his essay "Icones Symbolicae," Gombrich distinguishes two main currents of symbolism in European culture: the didactic Aristotelian tradition, and the more mystic Neo-Platonic tradition.<sup>18</sup> The first system tends to lead to personifications in the manner of Ripa's *Iconologia*.<sup>19</sup> Various attributes are allotted to figures representing abstract concepts, often in accordance with Aristotle's theory of the analogical metaphor in which "the second term is related to the first as the fourth is to the third. . . . For example, the cup is related to Dionysus as the shield is to Ares; so the poet will call the cup 'Dionysus' shield' and the shield 'Ares' cup'." Thus, Ripa uses the column to represent Strength, because the column is to a building what strength is to man. The effect of this imagery is pleasurable to the spectator, and as a result, the information imparted is remembered with greater ease. The Neo-Platonic system, on the other hand, sees symbols as a revelation provided by God of the ideas that dwell in his mind. According to one tradition handed down by Josephus, Adam or Seth recorded all knowledge before the Flood on two indestructible columns. These passed to the Egyptians (whence they derived their hieroglyphs), and from them to the Greeks, thus providing a language of symbolism ultimately deriving from God.<sup>20</sup> According to this tradition, then, symbols are an appropriate way of representing to mortals higher truths from the realm of ideas.

When it comes to Renaissance art, we find both these traditions in evidence, sometimes merging. For example, Botticelli's personification of Fortitude in the Uffizi clearly belongs to the Aristotelian tradition. The armor covering the arms and torso of the enthroned figure, along with the scepter, represent strength and authority, and protection against evil. The red robe would also underline the idea of zeal and power. Botticelli's *Primavera*, on the other hand, is undoubtedly Neo-Platonic in concept.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> E. H. Gombrich, *Symbolic Images: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance* (London: Phaidon, 1972), 123-95.

<sup>19</sup> Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia* (Rome, 1593). For Aristotle's theory of metaphor, see *Poetics* 1457b, here cited in the version in *Ancient Literary Criticism*, p. 120.

<sup>20</sup> Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 1. 70-71.

<sup>21</sup> For one interpretation, see Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), chap. 7, "Botticelli's *Primavera*."

Ronsard exhibits both these tendencies in his use of poetic imagery. On the one hand, he may use imagery in a clearly didactic form, not far removed from allegory in the medieval tradition as it was employed in the *Roman de la Rose*, or later in Clément Marot's poetry (e.g., *Le Temple de Cupido*). Such imagery is not uncommon in polemical poetry such as the *Discours des miseres de ce temps*. On the other hand, some of Ronsard's most successful poetry exploits imagery in the Neo-Platonic tradition. It is not simply something added to a text as an adornment or in order to convince, explain, or persuade. Rather, it is an integral part of the text, just like the individual details of the *Primavera*, and its function may be decorative, diegetic, and metaphorical all at the same time.

Examples of imagery in both these traditions would have been available to members of the Pléiade to admire and study, not least as a result of Francis I's efforts to attract Italian artists and masterpieces to the French court. However, it was the arrival of Rosso Fiorentino in 1530 which marked the start of a continuous tradition of art which was to become the preeminent style of the Valois dynasty, centered upon the palace of Fontainebleau and dominating aesthetic tastes for much of the century. Rosso was followed two years later by Primaticcio; between them, surrounded and assisted by followers from both Italy and France, they established the mannerist style of the First School of Fontainebleau.<sup>22</sup>

Both artists had, of course, been formed in Italy, although in quite different artistic backgrounds. Rosso was trained and worked in his native city of Florence until 1523, and during this time he studied with Andrea del Sarto, a number of whose paintings had been acquired by Francis I. (Del Sarto had spent several months in the king's service in 1518, but then returned to Florence with money entrusted to him for the acquisition of Italian works of art, and never went back.) In 1523, Rosso moved to Rome, where he fell under the influence of Raphael and Michelangelo. Blunt cites Raphael's decoration of the no longer extant Palazzo Branconio dell'Aquila in Rome

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<sup>22</sup> For details of the careers of Rosso and Primaticcio in France, see Blunt, *Art and Architecture in France*, pp. 61ff. See also Kurt Kusenberg, *Le Rosso* (Paris, 1931); Paola Barocchi, *Il Rosso Fiorentino* (Rome: Gismondi, 1950); and Louis Dimier, *Le Primatice* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1928). On the mannerist style in general, see John Shearman, *Mannerism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967).



as a model for the mixture of painting, stucco, and sculpture in the round typical of the Fontainebleau style of decoration.<sup>23</sup>

Primaticcio served his artistic apprenticeship in Mantua, where from 1526 he worked under Giulio Romano. The grand schemes designed for the Palazzo Te, with their complicated allegorical programs, intricate decoration, and taste for the bizarre, would also provide a model for Fontainebleau, and Primaticcio is credited by Vasari with being the first to introduce stucco work and frescoes to France, despite his arrival there two years after Rosso.<sup>24</sup>

It was not long before these artists set to work on the decoration of the recently built rooms of Fontainebleau: the Galerie François I<sup>er</sup> (1535–39); the Cabinet du Roi (1541–45); the Chambre de Madame d'Étampes (1541–44); the Porte dorée (1541–44); the Chambre de la Reine (1533–37); the Salle de Bal (1552–56); and the Galerie d'Ulysse (1541–70).<sup>25</sup> The result was a series of highly complex iconographical programs celebrating various aspects of the ruling house, exploiting a wide range of classical mythology and history, and systematically establishing parallels between the French court and the divinities of the ancient world. Naturally, it did not take long for this style to become widespread, and soon other nobles were decorating their own châteaux in a similar manner: Anne de Montmorency at Écouen; Diane de Poitiers at Anet; the Gouffier family at Oiron; and Antoine III de Clermont at Ancy le Franc.<sup>26</sup>

The rapid spread of such works of art cannot have failed to have an impact on the young members of the Pléiade in their ambition to establish French poetry on an equal footing with the masterpieces of

<sup>23</sup> Blunt, *Art and Architecture in France*, p. 62.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. On the work of Giulio Romano and his assistants in Mantua, see Gianna Suitner and Chiara Tellini Perina, *Palazzo Te a Mantova* (Milan: Electa, 1990).

<sup>25</sup> The dating of the various decorative projects at Fontainebleau is based on contemporary documents, in particular the *Comptes des bâtiments du roi* (1528–1571), edited by L. de Laborde (Paris, 1877–1880).

<sup>26</sup> J. Androuet du Cerceau, in his *Les Plus Excellens Bastimens de France*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1576), writing on the desire of the nobility to follow the lead of Francis I in the vicinity of Fontainebleau, remarks: "En somme, que tout ce que le Roy pouuoit recouurer d'excellens c'estoit pour son Fontainebleau: où il se plaisoit tant, que y voulant aller, il disoit qu'il alloit chez soi: qui fut cause que plusieurs grands seigneurs y firent bastir chacun en son particulier, tant que pour le iourdhuy y a beaucoup de beaux logis, et dignes d'estre remarquez."

the ancient world and of Renaissance Italy. The profusion of mythological subjects in the visual arts would have marked a distinct contrast with the predominantly religious and domestic art of the French Middle Ages, and offered a vision of the kind of grand art which the Pléiade would seek to emulate. Certainly, it is clear from his early poetry that Ronsard was a keen observer of such paintings, and that he found much to learn from the visual artist's approach to depicting grand themes. It is equally clear that he did not shy away from the enigmatic and erudite nature of the subjects presented in these works.

Given the complexity of the decorated schemes in many Renaissance palaces, the question inevitably arises as to how the owners and their visitors are meant to approach them. That the well-educated spectator would be looking for a meaning in the designs is beyond doubt. Cellini reports a conversation with Francis I about designs he had made for a doorway and a fountain, in which "the King began by asking me what I meant to represent by the fine fancy I had embodied in this design, saying that he had *understood* the door without explanation, but that he could not take the conception of my fountain, although it seemed to him most beautiful."<sup>27</sup> What may be doubted, however, is the extent to which anyone wandering through the galleries at Fontainebleau would be able to comprehend the overall meaning and organization of the decoration.

The first impression we receive on looking at the decoration of a room such as the Galerie François I<sup>er</sup> is one of exuberant grandeur (fig. 5). There are so many small details that make up the overall scheme that neither the mind nor the eye seems able to take very much in or to make sense of it. Yet clearly there is some sense. On a closer look, we see that each of the central frescoes contains a scene which has a narrative intention. The elaborate *inquadrature* include some common elements (such as the salamander surmounting each of the frescoes), but also many varying motifs, which at times appear to be obscurely linked with the central paintings; and there is a progression from picture to picture imposed upon us by our own progression through the gallery. We are being invited to do more than simply stand and wonder.

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<sup>27</sup> *The Life of Benvenuto Cellini*, 2, chap. 22 (p. 300), my italics.



In attempting to read and understand the iconography of the Galerie François I<sup>er</sup> or of any such programmatic decoration, it is necessary to proceed through various stages.<sup>28</sup> In looking at an individual bay, the fresco, as the largest single element and one which contains a clear narrative intention, must first hold our attention: what does it depict, and what transcendent meaning does it embody? Secondly, we should turn outwards to the *inquadratura*: what, if any, are the meanings of the elements of which it is composed, and what is the relationship between these motifs and the central painting? After this, we shall need to consider the program of the gallery as a whole: what is the relationship between the designs of the bays with one another? does the program have an overall formal and hermeneutic unity? A global understanding can only emerge if we consider the design as a whole, not simply concentrating on individual frescoes or other decorative elements.

In the case of the decoration at Fontainebleau, we have no firm idea about the identity of the men who devised the iconography in the various rooms of the palace. However, in the case of the château d'Anet, we have the program for the decoration of one room, but no surviving paintings. The scheme was devised by Pontus de Tyard, the Pléiade's Neo-Platonic theoretician, in the mid-1550s, and is preserved in print as the *Douze Fables de fleuves ou fontaines, avec la description pour la peinture, et les epigrammes*. . . .<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> For details of works devoted to the Galerie François I<sup>er</sup>, see Guy de Tervarent, *Les Énigmes de l'art*, vol. 4, *L'Art savant* (Bruges: Éditions De Tempel, [1952]), pp. 28–45, and Dora and Erwin Panofsky, "The Iconography of the Galerie François I<sup>er</sup> at Fontainebleau," *GBA* 2 (1958), 113–90. For more recent assessments, see Sylvie Béguin et al., *La Galerie François I<sup>er</sup> au château de Fontainebleau* (Paris: Flammarion, 1972), and Françoise Joukovsky's five articles: "L'Empire et les barbares dans la Galerie François I<sup>er</sup>," *BHR* 50 (1988), 7–28; "La Symbolique de l'immortalité: la Galerie François I<sup>er</sup> et la sculpture funéraire antique," *Studi francesi* 91 (1987), 5–19; "Humain et sacré dans la Galerie François I<sup>er</sup>," *Nouvelle revue du seizième siècle* 5 (1987), 5–23; "Une intervention providentielle: la Vénus de la Galerie François I<sup>er</sup>," in *Il tema della fortuna nella letteratura francese e italiana del rinascimento* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1990), 239–47; and "Guerre et paix dans une travée de la Galerie François I<sup>er</sup>," in *L'Intelligence du passé: les faits, l'écriture et le sens. Mélanges offerts à Jean Lafond par ses amis*, edited by Pierre Aquilon et al. (Tours: Université de Tours, 1988), 33–43.

<sup>29</sup> The *Douze Fables* . . . is included in Pontus de Tyard, *Œuvres poétiques complètes*, edited by John C. Lapp (Paris: Librairie Marcel Didier, 1966), pp. 255–77. There is an article on the work by Jean Miernowski, "La Poésie et la peinture: Les

One example will suffice to illustrate the techniques of representation used throughout the series. The last painting depicts the story of how Garmathon, the queen of Egypt, moved Isis to pity over the death of her son. Isis sent Osiris to fetch him from the Underworld, but Garmathon was so terrified at the barking of Cerberus that she sought help from Isis. The goddess subsequently had her bathe in her *lavatoire*, whose property was to remove all fear. The description for the painting is as follows:

Faudroit peindre à l'entree d'un enfer Poetique (tel comme l'ont descrit Virgile et les autres Poetes) Osiris, qui seroit vestu d'une robe longue blanche, et à l'entour de sa teste quelques rayons Solaires: car les Egyptiens l'estimoient estre le Soleil. Il seroit assez pres de Cerberus, chien à trois testes, selon la vulgaire description, représenté aboyant à gueule ouverte. En un autre endroit seroit représenté un temple d'Isis, qui se pourroit faire par une perspective à ligne visuelle de front, et basses diagonales de la maison d'Anet, pourveu que le peintre adjoust à la porte quelques testes de lyons ayans les gueules ouvertes, selon la superstition des Egyptiens. Et ainsi, par la porte se pourroit voir le dedans d'une partie du temple, sur le pavé duquel seroit escrit cecy, *Meum peplum nullus mortalium retexit*, ou en Grec, *Τὸν ἐμὸν πέπλον οὐδεὶς τῶν θνητῶν ἀπεκάλυψε*: car ceste inscription est tiree de ce qui estoit escrit sur le pavé du Temple d'Isis en Egypte. Aupres du Temple se verroit un Lavatoire, tel que celui mesme d'Anet, dedans lequel Garmathon Royne Egyptienne descendroit, guidee par Isis, vestue d'une longue robe comme celle d'Osiris: excepté qu'elle seroit peinte de diverses couleurs, comme blanc, bleu, rouge, et sur tout de noir, selon qu'elle est descrite par les anciens: Je suis toutesfois d'avis (et me semble l'avoir leu en bon auteur) qu'Isis se peut vestir de couleur blanche, et d'une noire plus courte en façon de surpelis qui seroit sur la blanche. Elle doit avoir au haut du front, un croissant: Car Isis represente la Lune, comme Osiris represente le Soleil.

(Pontus de Tyard, *Œuvres poétiques complètes*, 276–77)

(In the entrance of a poetic vision of hell [such as that described by Virgil and the other poets], Osiris should be painted, dressed in a long white robe, with some rays of sun around his head: for the Egyptians thought he was the Sun. He would be standing quite close to Cerberus, a three-headed dog, according to the general description, shown barking, with open jaws. In another spot, there would be a representation of a temple of Isis, which could be done by means of a line perspective seen from the front, with low diagonals, of the *château d'Anet*, provided that the painter added to the door a few lions' heads with open jaws, in accordance with the superstition of the Egyptians. In this way there could be seen through the door the inside of part of the temple, on whose floor would be written: *Meum peplum nullus mortalium retexit*, or in Greek *Τὸν ἐμὸν πέπλον οὐδεὶς τῶν θνητῶν ἀπεκάλυψεν* ["No mortal has uncovered my robe"]: for this inscription is taken from what was written on the floor of the Temple of Isis in Egypt. Close by to the Temple would be seen a bath, such as the one at Anet, into which would be stepping Garmathon, queen of Egypt, led by Isis, wearing a long robe like that of Osiris; except that it would be painted in various colors, such as white, blue, red, and especially black, according to the ancients' description of it. Nevertheless, I believe [and I think I have read it somewhere in a good author] that Isis may be dressed in a white robe, and in a shorter black one, like a surplice over the white. On the top of her forehead she must have a crescent moon: for Isis stands for the Moon, just as Osiris stands for the Sun.)

We can make a number of useful observations about this description. In the first place, we notice the use of different sections of the painting to represent events taking place at different times: one section showing Osiris in the Underworld, another showing the bath of Isis removing Garmathon's fears. This narrative technique was frequently used by mannerist painters in France before giving way to a stricter sense of unity of action in the seventeenth century.<sup>30</sup> Secondly, we

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<sup>30</sup> On this subject, see Josiane Rieu, "La Temporalisation de l'espace dans la peinture française du seizième siècle," in *Le Paysage à la Renaissance*, edited by



can see the use of symbols to suggest ideas: the rays of light around Osiris's head mark the god's connection with the sun; Isis has a crescent moon on her head to show her connection with the moon. Finally, we notice the deliberate linking of the story with the owner of the château: the temple of Isis looks like the entrance of the château d'Anet; the *lavatoire* resembles the fountain at Anet; and Isis, contrary to traditional descriptions, is dressed in black and white, the colors of Diane de Poitiers, with the crescent moon emphasizing the connection with the goddess Diana. No doubt Osiris, the sun-god, stands for Henry II. The story, like many of the other stories in this series of paintings, is taken from Plutarch's *De fluviis* (16. 1. 308), an indication of the abstruse nature of many of the sources for mannerist painting.

Thematic unity is provided, of course, by the presence of water in all the pictures; but to return to the Galerie François I<sup>er</sup>, the question of the overall unity of the program, both formal and thematic, remains. It is a problem that W. McAllister Johnson has considered on several occasions.<sup>31</sup> His conclusion is that while the deviser of the scheme may have had an overall thematic pattern in mind, arranged in concentric circles, and while there are formal patterns, based on the alternation of painted and stucco cartouches and wings which form something like four triptychs, no single mode of proceeding around the gallery could provide spectators with a view which would enable them fully to appreciate this unity in its entirety:

We know that the Mannerists of the 16th century lavished much attention upon iconographic detail in their festivals and triumphal entries that could never be appreciated at a distance, or by the majority of people viewing it. When extrapolated into a decorated gallery, analogy is easily drawn with the triumphal entry: its route, its stations and decors are in determined places, with even the monarch experiencing them only partially. But they exist in a *determined sequence*, with precise didactic elements and details inserted upon occasion,

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Yves Giraud (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 1988), 297–310.

<sup>31</sup> His final thoughts are in "Once More the Galerie François I<sup>er</sup> at Fontainebleau," *GB-A* 103 (1984), 127–44.

whether or not their place in a larger scheme is immediately apparent.<sup>32</sup>

The complex formal unity, of course, preceded any thematic unity, since we know that the *inquadrature* were completed before the frescoes. This unity works in various ways (see Appendix 1). There is, for example, complete symmetry on the north-south axis of the gallery with respect to the medium of the volets and the cartouches (stucco or paint). And there is symmetry with respect to the volets (but not the cartouches) on the east-west axis, emphasized by the crossbeams linking the bays in pairs. Finally, there is symmetry of the two outer bays in each group of three around the central bays (II and VI) with respect to cartouches and volets. This would suggest several ways of reading the frescoes in the gallery: individually, or in groups of two (the facing pairs, linked by the crossbeams), three (the "triptychs" formed in each corner of the gallery), four (the three groups of four bays in the same orbit of concentric circles), or six.

As far as the thematic unity of the programme is concerned, Françoise Joukovsky proposes that, in addition to McAllister Johnson's idea of concentric circles, we should add the notion that the progress through the gallery represents a kind of *cursus vitae* of the prince, a common theme in ancient funerary art.<sup>33</sup> Although the modern visitor to Fontainebleau moves through the gallery from west to east, the opposite was true in the sixteenth century, as André Chastel indicated.<sup>34</sup> In fact, the orientation of the gallery and the arrangement of the frescoes may in themselves be significant. The progress from east to west, from the rising to the setting sun, is an obvious parallel to the course of life from birth to death.

How far can such considerations on the decorative programs of Renaissance châteaux be applied to reading Ronsard's *Hymnes*? First of all, on the level of individual scenes described in Ronsard, it should not be surprising to see the telescoping of events, as in the designs for the paintings at the château d'Anet. The allusiveness of Ronsard's poetry is well-established, so we should be careful not to dismiss any descriptive elements that make up his scenes as being gra-

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<sup>32</sup> McAllister Johnson, 132.

<sup>33</sup> See *Studi francesi* 91 (1987): 13.

<sup>34</sup> *La Galerie François I<sup>er</sup> au château de Fontainebleau*, 143.

tuitously decorative. By looking at his narrative and descriptive scenes as we should a painting, we may get closer to the interpretation intended by the poet. Colors, flowers, different kinds of fruit, the presence of birds and animals, allusions to natural or mythological events may all have a significance which goes beyond the purely literal meaning, but to which Ronsard does not overtly draw attention.

Secondly, Ronsard makes frequent use of framing devices in his poetry, or includes little vignettes, in much the same way as Rosso uses the *inquadrature* at Fontainebleau to present related themes. Again, we should be wary of dismissing these details as simply decorative, or treating them separately from the central descriptions. Rather, we should be looking for parallels and extensions of the main theme in the framing devices and ecphrases.

Finally, as far as any overall program is concerned, we should bear in mind the architecture not only of individual hymns, but of entire collections of poems, as first published by Ronsard and as subsequently rearranged by him. Formal and thematic considerations clearly determined the order of hymns in any given collection, or even the later omission of some pieces. There is certainly evidence to suggest that symmetry, often of a complex nature, was one of these considerations, whether or not it was obvious to the reader. Moreover, such notions of symmetry can also be seen at work within individual poems.

However, as we have already observed, both painting and poetry inherited and adapted theoretical notions which were originally designed for the study of rhetoric. In the course of the next chapter, we shall consider the three divisions of rhetoric which most concern poetry and the visual arts—*inventio*, *dispositio*, and *elocutio*—in order to determine Ronsard's own attitudes and practice.

## CHAPTER 2

# *The Theoretical Background*

Ceuz qui ont dit que la vertu et les ars sourdoient d'une mesme source, c'est a dire, de ce profond abyme celeste ou est la divinité, ont bien entendu que la felicité de congnoistre les choses, et la perfection de les bien faire, avoient tout un et mesme effét.

(Thomas Sebillet, *Art poétique françois*)<sup>1</sup>

**T**he Pléiade did not introduce into France the Neo-Platonic conception of poetry which they exploited so much in order to give prestige to their endeavors. For example, the neo-Latin poet Salmon Macrin, writing around 1530 of the joys of the countryside, alluded to divine inspiration:<sup>2</sup>

Et si collibuit quid meditarier,  
nusquam est aura serenior,  
oestro nusquam animos ualdius entheo  
Nysaeusque bicorniger  
insignis que chely Delius incitant.

(*Carminum liber primus*, 20. 26–30)

(And if the fancy has come to consider writing some poem, nowhere else does the breeze bring fairer weather, nowhere else with greater power does the twin-horned Nysaeon [Bac-

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<sup>1</sup> References are taken from the 1932 edition by Félix GaiFFE.

<sup>2</sup> See *Le Livre des Épithalames (1528–1531), Les Odes de 1530 (Livres I & II)*, edited by Georges Soubeille (Toulouse: Association des Publications de l'Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail, 1978).



chus] and the Delian famous for his lyre [Apollo] goad hearts with inspired madness.)

Maurice Scève and the other poets of the École lyonnaise are well-known as early vernacular exponents of Neo-Platonism, while Thomas Sebillet in 1548, just one year before the publication of the *Deffence et illustration de la langue françoise*, emphasizes the divine origins of poetry in the first chapter of his *Art poetique françois*. Ronsard appears to see in Neo-Platonism a real explanation of the nature of poetry, particularly in the areas of *inventio* and *dispositio*, and he would return to a consideration of Neo-Platonic poetic theory many times in his career. In this chapter, we shall take a closer look at his ideas concerning poetic theory in order to assess their applicability to his own compositions, and in particular to grand poetry, including the *Hymnes*.<sup>3</sup>

## Inventio

In rhetorical terms, *inventio* is the division of speech concerned with the discovery of the ideas and material which make up the subject which the speaker or writer is treating. It was a small step to apply this term in the visual arts to the discovery of material for the scene or events which made up an individual painting or series of paintings. Frequently, as we have already seen, this was not the function of the artist who actually executed the work, but of a poet or humanist who was better acquainted with classical literature and mythology.

There were, however, different theories concerning the nature of *inventio*. In the *Ion*, Plato implies that it is only when possessed by the madness of the Muses that a poet can compose authentic poetry:

All good epic poets produce all their beautiful poems not by art but because they are inspired and possessed. So too with good lyric poets. . . . This is why god takes away their senses and uses them as servants, as he does divine prophets and

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<sup>3</sup> Further consideration of the topics dealt with in this chapter may be found in Grahame Castor, *Pléiade Poetics: A Study in Sixteenth-Century Thought and Terminology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), and Alex Gordon, *Ronsard et la rhétorique* (Geneva: Droz, 1970).



seers, so that we who hear may realize that it is not these persons, whose reason has left them, who are the speakers of such valuable words, but god who speaks and expresses himself to us through them.<sup>4</sup> (Ion 533-34)

*Inventio* for Plato, therefore, is not a conscious search, but rather the reception of material from outside sources. Horace, however, has a rather different view in the *Ars poetica*, lines 309-11:

scribendi recte sapere est et principium et fons.  
rem tibi Socraticae poterunt ostendere chartae,  
verbaque provisam rem non invita sequentur.

(Wisdom is the beginning and source of correct writing. Socratic books will be able to show you your material, and once the material is provided, the words will follow quite readily.)

In this case, we are dealing with *inventio* based upon learning rather than inspiration. In the area of the visual arts, Alberti, generally considered to be the first modern art theoretician, recommends painters to frequent writers in order to make use of their ideas:

Therefore I advise that each painter should make himself familiar with poets, rhetoricians, and others equally well learned in letters. They will give new inventions or at least aid in beautifully composing the *istoria* through which the painter will surely acquire much praise and renown in his painting.<sup>5</sup>

As far as the Pléiade was concerned, the Platonic doctrine of poetic inspiration was an important element in the vindication of their poetry, since it provided the truly inspired poet with not only literary but also social credentials. However, not all poetry was considered to be of equal importance, and Ronsard clearly distinguished in his own mind between different levels of poetry and between different kinds of poets. In his *Ode à Michel de l'Hospital* (L. III. 118-63), first published in 1552, he divides the ancient poets into three main categories: the "Poètes divins" (Eumolpus, Musaeus, Orpheus,

<sup>4</sup> Cited from the translation in *Ancient Literary Criticism*, 43.

<sup>5</sup> Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, translated by John R. Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 91.

Hesiod, Linus, and Homer); the "vieux Poètes humains" (for example, Aratus, Theocritus, Apollonius of Rhodes, Lycophron); and "les prophettes Romains" (no examples given, but Virgil would be the foremost of this category). What principally marks the difference between these groups is the degree of inspiration to which they can lay claim. Alluding, perhaps, to Horace's distinction between *ars* and *natura*,<sup>6</sup> Ronsard claims that the first group is divine

d'autant que la nature  
Sans art librement exprimoient,  
Sans art leur nayve escripture  
Par la fureur ilz animoyent. (lines 549-52)

(in as much as, without art, they freely expressed nature, without art, they brought alive their natural style of writing through divine frenzy.)

In other words, they were truly inspired by the Muses and other "Démons" so that they could reveal to men "les secretz des Dieux" (line 560).

The second group of poets could not rely on their own genius, their *natura*, to guide them, but instead called upon the technique and learning which they had acquired and developed (their *ars*) in order to write their verse:

Par un art melancolique  
Trahissoyent avec grand soing  
Leurs vers, esloignez bien loing  
De la sainte ardeur antique. (lines 575-78)

(With melancholic art, they transmitted their verse with great care, far removed from the ancient holy fervency.)

Even here, however, there is an element of predestination. Men are not "melancoliques" by chance, but because they were born under the influence of Saturn, as Ronsard indicates in *Les Daimons* (L. VIII. 125. 195): "Ceux de Saturne font l'homme melancolique" ("[The demons] associated with Saturn render man melancholy"). As a

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<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the background to this question in Horace, see C. O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry*, 394-400.

result, their melancholy is a noble affliction that leads to artistic creativity.<sup>7</sup> These poets include writers whom Ronsard admired and imitated. However, since they were denied the direct divine inspiration of the first generation of poets, they could only sing of earthly or physical things. The third group, the "prophetes Romains," received some inspiration from the Muses, here referred to as "leur grace," which acted upon them "plus lentement," however, than had been the case with the "Poëtes divins."

More than a decade later, in 1565, Ronsard made a similar tripartite division of the ancient poets in the *Abbrégé de l'art poétique françois*. The first group of divine poets is virtually the same (Musaeus is omitted from the list), and they are seen as acting as intermediaries for "les Oracles, Prophetes, Devins, Sybilles, Interpretes de songes." He then goes on to write of the second group of poets, this time giving more emphasis to their reliance on *ars*:

Long temps apres eulx sont venuz, d'un mesme païs, les seconds poëtes que j'appelle humains, pour estre plus enflez d'artifice & labeur que de divinité. (L. XIV. 5. 31-34)

(Long after them came, from the same country, the second group of poets whom I call human, because they were more inspired with workmanship and toil than with divinity.)

Of the third group, the Latin poets, he writes:

A l'exemple de ceux cy [i.e., les seconds poëtes], les poëtes Romains ont foisonné en telle fourmilierie, qu'ilz ont apporté aux librairies plus de charge que d'honneur, excepté cinq ou six desquelz la doctrine, accompagnée d'un parfait artifice, m'a tousjours tiré en admiration. (L. XIV. 5. 34-39)

(Like the latter, the Roman poets proliferated in such swarms that they brought more weight than honor to the bookshops, except for five or six whose learning, coupled with perfect workmanship, has always caused me to wonder.)

In the *Ode à Michel de l'Hospital*, Ronsard seems only to be referring

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<sup>7</sup> See R. Klibansky, E. Panofsky, and F. Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art* (London: Nelson, 1964).



to the five or six exceptions when he writes about the "prophetes Romains," but clearly, he believes that *ars* has taken over so completely from *natura* in the others that they are completely lacking in content.

Broadly speaking, therefore, Ronsard distinguishes three kinds of poetry: divinely inspired poetry, which deals with metaphysical truths; intellectually inspired poetry, which teaches us about the world in which we live; and uninspired poetry, which copies others and teaches nothing.

Later on, in the section entitled *De l'invention*, he seems to reaffirm this tripartite division, with Platonic and Aristotelian theories of imitation rubbing shoulders without any apparent conflict in his mind:

L'invention n'est autre chose que le bon naturel d'une imagination concevant les Idées & formes de toutes choses qui se peuvent imaginer tant celestes que terrestres, animées ou inanimées [*sic*], pour apres les représenter, décrire & imiter: car tout ainsi que le but de l'orateur est de persuader, ainsi celui du Poëte est d'imiter, inventer, & représenter les choses qui sont, qui peuvent estre, ou que les anciens ont estimé comme véritables. . . . Quand je te dy que tu inventes choses belles & grandes, je n'entends toutesfois ces inventions fantastiques et melencoliques, qui ne se rapportent non plus l'une à l'autre que les songes entrecoupez d'un frenetique, ou de quelque patient extremement tourmenté de la fievre, à l'imagination duquel, pour estre blessée, se représentent mille formes monstrueuses sans ordre ny liayson.

(L. XIV. 12-13. 171-79, 183-90)

(*Inventio* is nothing other than the natural property of the individual imagination, conceiving the ideas and forms of everything which can be imagined, both heavenly and earthly, animate or inanimate, in order subsequently to represent, describe, and imitate them. For just as the aim of the orator is to persuade, so that of the poet is to imitate, invent, and represent those things which are, which may be, or which the ancients thought to be true. . . . When I tell you to invent beautiful and grand things, I do not, however, mean those fantastical and melancholy inventions which are no more self-

consistent than the interrupted dreams of a madman, or of some patient who is extremely racked with fever, to whose imagination, because it is damaged, there appear a thousand monstrous shapes, without any order or connection.)

The allusion to "les Idées & formes de toutes choses ... tant celestes que terrestres" clearly brings to mind the Platonic theory of inspired imitation, while, on the other hand, the idea that "le but ... du Poète est d'imiter, inventer, & représenter les choses qui sont, qui peuvent estre, ou que les anciens ont estimé comme veritables" is more Aristotelian.<sup>8</sup> The rejection of "inventions fantastiques et mel-encholiques" would appear to be a way of coming to terms with Plato's condemnation of poetry in the *Republic*: there is a difference between inspired intuition and the sick imaginings of a delirious patient.

Ronsard was not, of course, the first person to attempt to categorize poets and poetry after Plato's exclusion of the poet from his ideal republic had brought the issue of the status of poetry to a head: was the poet able to teach men anything, or, like the painter representing a bed, was he simply moving further away from truth, from the ideal form of things?<sup>9</sup> In particular, the standing of Homer as the source of Greek religious beliefs was a question of prime importance. While Aristotle in the *Poetics* could vindicate poetry on the purely intellectual grounds that the depiction of probable events has a more exemplary, and therefore morally improving, function than the reporting of actual events,<sup>10</sup> this defense was not enough for all champions of poetry, especially the Neo-Platonists. Dismayed by the apparent contradiction in Plato between his acceptance of the notion of divine inspiration through the poetic *mania* and his rejection of poets as morally corrupting, they sought to resolve the problem by showing that Plato was talking about different categories of poetry at different times.

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<sup>8</sup> See in particular Aristotle's section in the *Poetics* on verisimilitude, 1451a-b (*Ancient Literary Criticism*, 102): "The poet's job is saying not what did happen but the sort of thing that would happen, that is, what can happen in a strictly probable or necessary sequence." The similarity with Aristotle is perhaps more apparent in the version used after 1567: "les choses qui sont ou qui peuvent estre *vraisemblables*" (my italics).

<sup>9</sup> For Plato's discussion, see in particular *Republic* 10.

<sup>10</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1451b.

It is perhaps the fifth-century Neo-Platonist, Proclus, who produces the most complete defense of poetry, Homer, and Plato in essay 6 of his commentary *In Rempublicam*.<sup>11</sup> Although this work seems only to have been published *in extenso* once in the sixteenth century (Bâle, Grynaeus, 1534), Conrad Gesner translated and published the sixth essay in 1542, under the title *Ex commentariis Procli Lycii, philosophi Platonici in libros Platonis de Repub. apologiae quaedam pro Homero, & fabularum aliquot enarrationes* (Zürich, Froschoverus). It is no doubt as a result of this edition that Proclus's ideas received a wider audience.<sup>12</sup>

Rather than accepting the notion that Plato's views on poetry may have evolved with the passage of time, Proclus manages to harmonize the master's various writings on the subject (particularly in the *Republic*, the *Ion*, the *Laws*, and the *Phaedrus*); he distinguishes four types of poetry (three main types of which the third type is subdivided).<sup>13</sup>

- (a) inspired poetry (ἔνθεος ποιητικὴ)
- (b) didactic poetry, which derives from the intellectual faculties (νοῦς καὶ φρόνησις)
- (c) imitative poetry (μιμητικὴ) which attempts to copy life correctly (τὸ εἰκαστικόν) or which uses the imagination to represent an illusory appearance of reality (τὸ φανταστικόν).

It is only this final category, poetry that relies on illusory imitation, that Plato is condemning in the *Republic*, argues Proclus.<sup>14</sup>

Naturally, if there are four kinds of poetry, four different approaches to them are necessary. "Fantastic" mimetic poetry (which for Proclus includes tragedy) appeals principally to the emotions and

<sup>11</sup> The work is available in a French translation by A. J. Festugière, *Commentaire sur la République*, 3 vols. (Paris: Vrin, 1970). See also Anne D. R. Sheppard, *Studies on the 5th and 6th Essays of Proclus' Commentary on the Republic*, Hypomnemata 61 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1980), and Robert Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), chap. 5, 162-232.

<sup>12</sup> On the dissemination and influence of Proclus in the sixteenth century, see my article, "Conrad Gesner et le fabuleux manteau," *BHR* 47 (1985): 305-20.

<sup>13</sup> *In Rempublicam* 6. 177ff. (Festugière edition, 197-213). For a useful discussion of this section, see Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian*, 188-97.

<sup>14</sup> 6. 196-99 (Festugière, 214-16). Proclus no doubt derives these two categories of mimetic poetry from Plato's *Sophist*, 235d-236c.



seeks to persuade by emotional means (*ψυχαγωγία*). Thus, it is to be avoided. "Eikastic" (or "image-making") mimetic poetry, on the other hand, aims at an accurate representation of reality, and appeals to our sense perceptions. While not being positively harmful, it is inferior to the other two kinds of poetry.

Didactic poetry appeals to the mind and teaches us about both natural phenomena, in as far as they can be determined by the intellect, and also ethical matters. This kind of poetry may be understood by anyone, and is clearly beneficial to the reader.

Finally, inspired poetry is the highest form, since in order for a poet to write it, he has to receive the poetic *mania* to enable him to learn things by supra-rational means. Thus, he can expound to men eternal truths which otherwise would remain hidden. However, unlike the knowledge imparted by didactic poetry, the truths conveyed by inspired poetry will be in allegorical form, with the result that not everyone will be able to interpret them. Inspired poetry is therefore not suitable for everyone to read, and the examples which Proclus cites in Homer—the adultery of Ares and Aphrodite (*Odyssey* 8. 266–366) and the seduction of Zeus on Mount Ida (*Iliad* 14. 153–351)—were superficially amongst the most shocking of the Homeric myths.

Proclus's remarks on poetry are not always explicit or unequivocal, and scholars still disagree about his exact meaning. But clearly, there is more than a little overlap between this Neo-Platonic account of poetry and the views expressed by Ronsard in the *Ode à Michel de l'Hospital* and the *Abbrégé de l'art poétique françois*.

Despite being in holy orders, Ronsard would have had few qualms about accepting these theories concerning inspired poetry.<sup>15</sup> However, any doubts about their orthodoxy would have been dispelled by no less an authority than St. Augustine, himself an avid reader of Neo-Platonic writers. It is clearly he who provides Ronsard with some of his ideas about the divine poets. In the *City of God* 18.

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<sup>15</sup> Pontus de Tyard, of course, was another member of the Pléiade who had no problems in reconciling Neo-Platonism with Christianity, and his beliefs did not prevent his appointment by the ecclesiastical authorities as bishop of Chalon-sur-Saône in 1578. Similarly, Sebillet speaks of Moses, David, Solomon, Jeremiah and other Old Testament prophets in the same breath as ancient Greek prophets or poets such as Orpheus and Homer (*Art poétique*, 11–13).



37, he writes: "Only, therefore, the theological poets, Orpheus, Linus, Musaeus, and the others (if there were any more) were before our canonical prophets. But they were not more ancient than our true divine Moses, who taught them one true God. . . ." <sup>16</sup> The slightly more disparaging comments that Augustine makes in 18.14 about these poets could simply be put down to the allegorical and mystical nature of their writings.

Ronsard recognizes the fact that his convenient historical divisions are not the final word on the subject. He himself is an inspired poet, and without the poetic *fureur*, he can only write pedestrian verse. In the poem addressed *A Monsieur de Belot* (L. XV. 15-38), first published in 1569, he speaks in line 55 of the four Platonic frenzies ("Bacchus, Amour, les Muses, Apollon"), and writes, in lines 64-66, that without them:

Je bée en vain, & mon Esprit attend  
Tantost six mois, tantost un an, sans faire  
Vers qui me puisse ou plaire ou satisfaire. <sup>17</sup>

(I gape in vain, and my spirit waits, sometimes six months, sometimes a year, without writing a line capable of pleasing or satisfying me.)

In order to write inspired poetry, to become "& poëte & prophette" (line 58), he must be patient:

J'attends venir (certes je n'en ments point)  
Cette fureur qui la Sybille espoint:  
Mais aussi tost que par long intervalle  
Dedans mon cœur du Ciel elle devalle,  
Colere, ardent, furieux, agité,  
Je tramble tout soubz la divinité. (lines 67-72)

(I await the arrival [certainly I am not lying] of that frenzy which goads the Sibyl; but as soon as, after a long break, it descends from heaven into my heart, chafing, burning, raging, stirred up, I tremble all over beneath the effect of the divinity.)

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<sup>16</sup> St. Augustine, *The City of God*, translated by John Healey, edited by R. V. G. Tasker, 2 vols. (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1945), 2: 211-12.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. also Ronsard's *Élégie au roi* (L. XVIII. 120).

He proceeds with his composition like an unstoppable stream.

Elle me dure ou le cours d'un Soleil,  
 Quelquefois deux, quelquefois trois, puis morte  
 Elle languist en moy de telle sorte  
 Que faict la fleur languissant pour un temps,  
 Qui plus gaillarde aparoit au printemps,  
 Par son declin prenant force & croissance,  
 Et de sa mort une longue naissance.

.....

Et lors du Ciel je devalle en la terre,  
 Ah! & en lieu de vivre entre les Dieux,  
 Je deviens homme à moy-mesme odieux.  
 Mais quand du tout cet ardeur se retire,  
 Je ne scaurois ny penser ny redire  
 Les vers escrits, & ne m'en souvient plus:  
 Je ne suis rien qu'un corps mort & perclus  
 De qui l'ame est autrepert envolée,  
 Laissant son hoste aussy froid que gelée. . .

(lines 88-94, 106-14)

(It lasts either a single course of the sun, sometimes two, sometimes three, then dying it languishes in me just like the flower which languishes for a time, but which appears more full of life in the springtime, drawing strength and growth from its decline, and a long birth from its death. . . And then I descend from heaven to earth, oh! and instead of living amongst the gods, I become a man, hateful to myself. But when this burning completely withdraws, I can neither conceive nor repeat the lines I have written, and have no recollection of them. I am no more than a dead, benumbed body, whose soul has flown elsewhere, leaving its host as cold as frost. . .)

Clearly, then, Ronsard at times feels that his soul is able to escape its corporeal prison through some kind of divine *furor*, and that the poetry he composes as a result of this, whether he understands it or not, embodies divine truths.

It follows from this that, just as different approaches are necessary in considering the poetry of the ancients, so too Ronsard's poetry

will have to be interpreted in different ways, according to whether or not he believed it to be divinely inspired. Indeed, Proclus discerned in Homer all four types of poetry, but with a preponderance of inspired poetry. However, since the two types of imitative poetry, by definition, were not deemed to embody any transcendent meaning, it was inspired poetry and didactic poetry which had to be most carefully differentiated, since both were expressing things in a non-literal way, usually through the medium of myth and fable.

Proclus, following Plato, recognizes two different kinds of fable: philosophical myths, suitable for the education of the young; and divinely-inspired myths, often of a superficially shocking nature, suitable only for those who are well-educated and in search of mystic truths.<sup>18</sup> Of the first kind would be Plato's own myths, for example that of the cavern in book 7 of the *Republic*, while the majority of the more shocking Homeric myths would be of the second type. In fact, as we have noted, it is the shocking nature of many of these stories which alerts us to their mystical meaning.

These two categories of fable as used in poetry correspond closely to Gombrich's Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic traditions of symbolism in the visual arts, and in fact, the various divisions and subdivisions of poetry established by Proclus apply neatly to French Renaissance art. To take the various categories, we can see that "image-making" mimetic art is an appropriate description of the fine portraits produced in this period, while fantastic or illusionistic mimetic art might be represented by the numerous examples of bizarre, decorative faces and figures which were so popular at this time.<sup>19</sup> Didactic art is also common, with many allegorical works in the Aristotelian tradition celebrating members of the royal household. For example, the Fontainebleau fresco of an elephant representing Francis I suggests implicitly various qualities in the king: strength, fidelity, patience,

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<sup>18</sup> Proclus 6. 76ff. (Festugière, 94-102).

<sup>19</sup> Examples from Fontainebleau may be found in the works of the supposed Juste de Juste, reproduced in Henri Zerner, *The School of Fontainebleau*, J. 1-17. In Italy, illusionistic mimetic art is represented by the works of Arcimboldo. Fernand Halyn comments on his fantastic landscapes and G. Comanini's discussion of them, based on Plato's *eikastic/fantastic* distinction mentioned above (n. 14), in his paper "Le Paysage anthropomorphe," in *Le Paysage à la Renaissance*, 43-54, especially 48-51. Comanini's discussion is in *Il Figino*, and is available in P. Barocchi, *Trattati d'arte del cinquecento*, vol. 3 (Bari: Laterza, 1962).



wisdom, piety, etc. Finally, there is also no lack of the more abstruse, apparently shocking allegory associated with inspired poetry, including a number of portrayals of the adultery of Mars and Venus. We shall largely concentrate on these last two types of art in this study.

Both allegorical traditions were at work in the visual arts and poetry before Ronsard began work on his own compositions. However, although the Neo-Platonic tradition was a relatively new one in French poetry, its place in the visual arts had been firmly established by the Italian painters who had been persuaded by Francis I to work for the French court, and there is evidence in Ronsard's early poems that he was both impressed and influenced by them.

*Inventio*, however, was only one element of artistic creation affected by Neo-Platonism, and the second division of rhetoric, *dispositio*, with its inherent idea of order and harmony, would also be strongly tinged with Neo-Platonic tones in the Renaissance.

## Dispositio

*Dispositio*, the structuring or orderly arrangement of a work of art, can be seen to function on two levels. On one level, we are concerned with the structure of an individual work of art: a poem, a painting, for example. On the other level, we are concerned with the overall structure of a collection of individual works of art: a sonnet sequence, a cycle of frescoes, etc. Parallels between poetry and the visual arts clearly exist in this area, and we have noted the suggestion that structure can be helpful in our understanding of the iconography of the Galerie François I<sup>er</sup>. In this section we shall consider how a proper understanding of *dispositio* can suggest ways of reading a poem or a collection of poems.

Ronsard scholars have, of course, recognized structural organization along architectural principles in Ronsard's works. Malcolm Quanton and Doranne Fenoaltea have shown the way in which important structural devices help to shape individual poems: circularity as a closural device in the sonnets, as perceived by Malcolm Quanton, *emboîtement* and *imbrication* (ring patterns and parallel structures) in the *Odes*, illustrated by Doranne Fenoaltea. In the case of books of poems, too, Doranne Fenoaltea sees both these processes at work in the shaping of a collection, while Jean Céard and Louis

Terreaux have investigated the *dispositio* of books of hymns, odes, and the *Second Livre des Amours*.<sup>20</sup> Terreaux, referring to the latter, sees architectural principles at work:

The relationship between Ronsard's art and music is often mentioned. The plastic arts are less frequently alluded to. However, the poet is building a temple to Marie. . . . This attention to the arrangement of the architectural elements is again seen in the care taken by the reviser in erecting a finely-proportioned literary edifice.<sup>21</sup>

Ronsard himself had no doubts as to the importance of structure in poetry. In his *Abbégé de l'art poétique françois*, he wrote:

Tout ainsi que l'invention despend d'une gentille nature d'esprit, ainsi la disposition despend de la belle invention, laquelle consiste en une elegante et parfaite collocation & ordre des choses inventées, & ne permet que ce qui appartient à un lieu soit mis en l'autre, mais se gouvernant par artifice, estude & labeur, ajance & ordonne dextrement toutes choses à son point.

(L. XIV. 14. 196-202)

(Just as *inventio* depends on nobility of spirit, so *dispositio* depends on fine invention, which consists of an elegant and perfect arrangement and ordering of invented things, and does not allow what belongs in one place to be put elsewhere, but being directed by craftsmanship, study, and toil, it skilfully accommodates and disposes everything in its right place.)

We can see this principle at work in his earliest compositions. For example, in the 1549 ode *Des Peintures contenues dedans un tableau*

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<sup>20</sup> Malcolm Quinton, "Mythological Reference, Circularity, and Closure in Ronsard's *Amours de Cassandre*," in *Ronsard in Cambridge*, 67-80; Doranne Fenoaltea, "Les Modes d'organisation des Odes de 1550," in *Ronsard en son IV<sup>e</sup> centenaire: L'Art de poésie*, 91-100, and *Du Palais au jardin: l'architecture des Odes de Ronsard*, THR 241 (Geneva: Droz, 1990); Jean Céard, "La Disposition des livres des *Hymnes* de Ronsard," *Cahiers Textuel* 34/44, 1 (1985), 83-99, and "D'une ode à l'autre: la disposition des livres des Odes," in *Ronsard: Colloque de Neuchâtel*, ed. André Gendre (Neuchâtel: Faculté des Lettres Neuchâtel, 1987), 179-92; and Louis Terreaux, "Sur l'organisation du *Second Livre des Amours*," in *Ronsard in Cambridge*, 81-95.

<sup>21</sup> *Ronsard in Cambridge*, 92.



(L. I. 259–64), Ronsard describes a composite painting which bears a strong resemblance in its structure to the individual bays in the *Galerie François I<sup>er</sup>*, but which probably also owes something to the engravings which accompanied early Renaissance editions of Virgil and Ovid (see fig. 6).<sup>22</sup>

Occupying probably the center of the “tableau” we have a picture of Vulcan’s forge in the depths of Mount Etna, a popular subject for Fontainebleau artists (cf. fig. 4):

Où la grand bande renfrognée  
Des Cyclopes laborieux,  
Est à la forge embesongnée,  
Qui d’un effort industrieux  
Haste un tonnerre, armure pour la destre  
De ce grand Dieu, à le ruer adestre.

Trois, sur l’enclume gemissante  
D’ordre egal le vont martelant,  
Et d’une tenaille pinçante  
Tournent l’ouvrage estincelant:  
Vous les diriez qu’ils ahanent & suent  
Tant obstinés leur labeur continuent.

.....

Les autres, deus soufflets entonnent  
Lesquels en leurs ventres enflés,  
Prennent le vent, & le redonnent  
Par compas aus charbons soufflés.  
Le metal coulle, & dedans la fournaise  
Comme un etang se répand en la braise.

(lines 7–18, 25–30)

(Where the great frowning band of industrious Cyclopes is busy in the forge, diligently pressing on to complete a thunderbolt, a weapon for the right hand of that great god, who is skilful in hurling it. Three of them are hammering it in turn

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<sup>22</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this ode, see my article “Ronsard the Painter,” as well as Patricia Eichel, “Quand le poète-fictor devient pictor . . .,” and Roberto E. Campo, “The Arts in Conflict.”

on the groaning anvil, and with tightly-closed pincers turn the shining work over; you would say they are grunting and sweating, so resolutely do they go on with their toil. . . . The others cause two bellows to resound, which take air into their swollen bellies and return it at regular intervals to the glowing coals. The metal flows, and inside the furnace, spreads like a pool in the embers.)

Above this, Jupiter is making use of his thunderbolts, raining down upon both land and sea:

Un peu plus haut parmi les nues  
Enflées d'un vague ondoiant,  
Le Pere ses fleches connues  
Darde aval d'un bras foudroiant.  
Le feu se suit, & sacageant l'air, gronde  
Faisant trembler les fondemens du monde.

(lines 31-36)

(A little above this in the clouds, which are swollen with a billowing void, the Father hurls down his renowned arrows with devastating arm. Fire follows and, as it tears through the air, it groans, causing the foundations of the world to tremble.)

To the left of this scene, we have a picture of Juno's seduction of Jupiter on Mount Ida, taken from *Iliad* 14, with a detailed description of scenes and figures embroidered on Venus' magic girdle:

A cousté gauche de l'orage  
Junon sa colere celant,  
De Venus emprunte l'ouvrage,  
Son riche baudrier excellent:  
Et le ceignant, sa force coutumiere  
Son mari tire à l'amitié premiere.

(Là, les amours sont portraits d'ordre,  
Celui qui donte les oiseaux,  
Et celui qui vient ardre & mordre  
Le cueur des Dauphins sous les eaus.  
Leandre, proie à l'amour inhumaine,  
Pendur aus flots noue où l'amour le meine.)

Elle, deçà & là éparses  
Enchaîne ses mains à son col,  
Lui, dedans ses mouelles arses  
Avale un amour tendre & mol,  
Et en baisant ce grand corps, fait renaître  
Le beau printems saison du premier estre.

(lines 50-66)

(To the left of the storm, Juno, concealing her rage, is borrowing Venus's handiwork, her excellent rich girdle; as she puts it on, its customary force draws her husband to their former affection. [On it, the various types of love are portrayed in order: the love which tames birds, and that which burns and eats into the hearts of dolphins in the water. Leander, a victim of inhuman love, is hanging on the waves as he swims to where love leads him.] Juno with hands spread in all directions encircles Jupiter's neck, while he receives into his burning marrow tender, soft love, and in kissing her noble body causes beautiful springtime to be reborn, the season of primeval being.)

Weaving in and out between these three scenes we have a picture of Oceanus, with successful and unsuccessful sea battles of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V:

De l'Océan l'image empreinte  
Contraint ses portraits finissans,  
D'asur verdoiant elle est peinte,  
Et d'argent ses flots blanchissans,  
Où les Dauphins aus dos courbés i nouent,  
Et en un rond ils follatrent & jouent.

Au meillieu de l'onde imprimée  
Comme grandes forests, on voit  
S'élever la navale armée  
Que Charles à Thunis avoit,  
Les flots batus des avirons qui sonnent  
En tournoiant murmurent & resonnent.

.....

Pres de Thunis sur le bord More,

L'Africain aveugle au danger,  
 La mer verte en pourpre colore  
 Au sang du soudart étranger:  
 Mars les anime, & la discorde irée  
 Trainant sa robe en cent lieux dessirée.

(lines 67-77, 85-90)

(The printed image of Oceanus surrounds the edges of the pictures; it is painted in turquoise, its breaking waves in silver, where curved-backed dolphins swim, and frolic and play in a circle. In the midst of the painted sea, like mighty forests can be seen rising up the fleet which Charles had at Tunis; the waves struck by the resounding oars murmur and re-echo as they billow.... Near Tunis on the Moorish shore, the African, blind to danger, stains the green sea purple with the blood of foreign soldiers; Mars excites them, and raging Discord, trailing her robe, which is rent in countless places.)

Below this, almost certainly set in a separate cartouche, we should imagine a triumphal entry by Henry II into Paris, with Charles V dragged through the streets in humiliation:

Tout au bas, d'une couleur palle  
 Est repaint l'Empereur Romain,  
 Craignant nostre Roi qui egalle  
 Les Dieus par les faits de sa main.  
 Mais pour neant, car de Henri la lance  
 Ja ja captif le traine dans la France.

Paris tient ses portes decloses  
 Recevant son Roi belliqueur,  
 Une grande nue de roses  
 Pleut à l'entour du chef vainqueur.  
 Les feus de joie ici & là s'alument,  
 Et jusque au ciel les autels des Dieus fument.

(lines 91-102)

(Right at the bottom, the Holy Roman Emperor is painted, with pale complexion, in fear of our king who equals the gods with his feats. But it is for nought, for Henry's lance is already driving him a prisoner through France. Paris has her gates



flung open, receiving her warrior king; a great cloud of roses rains down around the conquering leader. Bonfires are being lit in various places, and the altars of the gods send smoke heavenwards.)

As in some of the frescoes at Fontainebleau, then, Ronsard is describing a composite painting, with various non-synchronous episodes juxtaposed, and an extra scene set in a cartouche. Allegory plays an important part in this painting, and almost none of the apparently decorative elements is innocent of meaning. Moreover, although, inevitably, the scenes are presented in a linear fashion, it is necessary to view them as a whole if their essential unity is to be appreciated. As I have argued elsewhere, we are dealing here with a complicated but unified allegory. The themes of the preparation for Jupiter of stormy weather in Vulcan's forge, the storm itself, and the advent of spring all parallel the wars between France and the Holy Roman Empire. The clear Virgilian and Homeric echoes help to make this reading explicit, and in fact the storm described in *Georgics* 1. 311–34 which partly serves as a model for Ronsard has itself been read as an allegory of the Roman civil wars.<sup>23</sup>

However, in terms of the poem's structure, there may be clearer parallels between the mythological and the historical sections, based on the principle of *imbrication* or parallel structures. Lines 7–30, the preparation of the thunderbolts, appear to be linked with lines 73–84, Charles V's victory at Tunis, where the Emperor is safe because Jupiter, the divine arbiter, is unarmed. Lines 31–48, where Jupiter is using his thunderbolts, may then be linked with lines 85–90, the defeat of Charles V at Algiers. God, now armed, intervenes in Charles's campaigns. In fact, it was largely because of an unrelenting storm which destroyed much of Charles V's fleet and cut off his reinforcements that this debacle took place. Finally, the seduction of Jupiter on Mount Ida and the advent of spring (lines 31–48) forms a parallel with the return of peace on the triumphal victory of Henry II. Thus, the poem offers the following structure:

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Gary B. Miles, *Virgil's Georgics: A New Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 98–110.



1-6	Apostrophe of the "tableau"—its lifelike nature	
7-30	The Cyclopes prepare Jupiter's thunderbolts	—
31-48	Jupiter uses his thunderbolts—the storm	—
49-66	Jupiter is seduced by Juno—return of spring	—
67-72	Oceanus—decorative and structural	—
73-84	Charles V victorious at Tunis	—
85-90	Charles V defeated at Algiers—by storm	—
91-102	Triumph of Henry II—return of peace	—

We shall see later that this kind of structure is not uncommon in Ronsard's poetry.

This feature of Ronsard's writing calls into question the distinction between the apparently linear nature of reading poetry, as contrasted with the non-linear nature of reading a painting. For while it is true that readers of poetry have a series of lines of verse imposed upon them as they read through a poem from beginning to end, it is not necessarily true that this order should be the one that their minds will retain when they think about the poem and attempt to make sense of it.<sup>24</sup> In the case of a short poem, a sonnet perhaps, it may be that the linear approach is the most obvious one, though even this is open to question. Let us consider one of the sonnets from the 1554 *Bocage*, L. VI. 52-53.

Morfée, s'il te plaist de me représenter  
 Cette nuit ma Cassandre aussi belle & gentille  
 Que je la vi le soir quand sa vive scintille  
 Par ne sçai quel regard vint mes yeus enchanter: 4  
 Et s'il te plaist encor tant soit peu d'alenter  
 (Miserable souhet!) de sa feinte inutile  
 Le feu qu'amour me vient de son aile sutile  
 Tout alentour du cœur, sans repos, eventer: 8  
 Sur le haut de mon lit en vœu je t'apendrai,  
 Devot, un saint tableau, sur lequel je peindrai  
 L'heur que j'aurai reçu de ta forme douteuse,

<sup>24</sup> Roberto E. Campo, in his analysis of *Des peintures . . .*, sees the work as demonstrating both the shortcomings of the painter's ability to represent sequential events synchronously in a single painting, and the superiority of poetry. However, the activity of the spectator and of the reader are not so dissimilar, once linear presentation in a poem breaks down, as is the case here.

Et comme Jupiter à Troye fut deceu 12  
Du Somme & de Junon, apres avoir receu  
De la simple Venus la ceinture amoureuse.

(Morpheus, if you are willing to show me tonight my Cassandra, as beautiful and as gracious as I saw her on the evening when her bright sparkling bewitched my eyes by its ineffable gaze; and if you are also willing [oh wretched wish!] to abate however little the fire of her useless apparition, which love without respite comes to fan with his cunning wing all around my heart; I shall piously hang up for you as a votive offering on the top of my bed a sacred picture, on which I shall depict the good fortune I shall have received from your uncertain image, and how Jupiter at Troy was deceived by Sleep and Juno, after she received the amorous girdle of simple Venus.)

From the point of view of chronology, this short poem covers a broad time span, with only the barest reference to the starting point in the present, contained in the apostrophe to Morfée (line 1). After the first word, we are projected into the future—"Cette nuit"—where the poet wishes to dream of his beloved just as she was—and we now move back to an unspecified but quite distant past (lines 3–4), emphasized by the use of the past historic (*vi, vint*)—when he first fell in love with her. Lines 5 and 6 return us to this hoped-for future when the poet wishes to have some relief from the love which is always with him (lines 7–8). These two quatrains form the prodisis of the single conditional sentence which constitutes the entire sonnet. The apodosis projects us to a future some time after "Cette nuit," when the poet, if his prayer is answered, will hang a votive painting on his bed (lines 9–11). Again, Ronsard's use of the future and future perfect tenses is precise (*apendrai, peindraï, aurai reçu*). The poem finishes, however, with the subject of this painting, the Homeric account of the seduction of Zeus by Hera on Mount Ida, described again in the past historic (*fut deceu*). Schematically, we could present the various times referred to as follows, where the letters A–E represent the chronological order of the events:

- 1-2 D ("Cette nuit")  
3-4 B (the innamoramanto)  
5-6 D ("Cette nuit")

- 7-8 C (continuous present)  
 9-11 E (after "cette nuit")  
 12-14 A (Trojan war)

Thus, there is an alternation between future and past or present.

At the same time, Ronsard establishes an implicit comparison between his love for Cassandre and the loves of Zeus and Hera, with Morfée, the god of dreams, acting in his case in the same way that Somme (Hypnos) acted in the case of the two Homeric gods. Although the painting of this scene is the last element in the poem, we are encouraged by this clear parallel to return to the beginning of the poem. No doubt, too, there is a strong element of wishful thinking in referring to the Homeric myth, for in that story, it is the female who sets out to seduce the male, though for her own devious ends.

The textual allusions add yet another dimension, as Ronsard encourages us to interpret the sonnet in a non-literal sense. Lines 9-10 seem to allude to Horace, *Odes* 1. 5. 13-16:

... me tabula sacer  
 votiva paries indicat uvida  
 suspendisse potenti  
 vestimenta maris deo

(... the temple wall declares with a votive picture that I have  
 hung up my wet clothes for the powerful god of the sea)

where Horace is congratulating himself for being beyond the reach of love. And the Homeric text, quoted by Belleau in his commentary on this sonnet, speaks of the magic *cestos* of Aphrodite which contains "love, and desire, and loving converse, that steals the wits even of the wise" (*Iliad* 14. 216-17).<sup>25</sup> Is Ronsard undermining, through these allusions, his experience of love? This may be uncertain. What can be concluded, however, is that the structure of this sonnet is a complex one, and that a strictly linear reading will not lead to a full understanding of it.

So far, we have considered two examples of *dispositio* drawn from individual poems, and we have seen that even in the case of a sonnet,

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<sup>25</sup> See Rémy Belleau, *Commentaire au Second Livre des Amours de Ronsard*, ed. Marie-Madeleine Fontaine and François Lecercle (Geneva: Droz, 1986), 78.



the structure can be a complex one. But what of the *dispositio* of entire books of poems? And what happens when Ronsard rearranged his works in later editions?

Although ancient writers on rhetoric and poetry devoted much space to the internal structure of an individual work (whether it be a speech or a poem), little or nothing seems to have been said about the way in which poems may be grouped together to form a collection, such as Virgil's *Eclogues*, Horace's *Odes*, or Propertius's love elegies. However, it has long been clear that some principle was at work, and Helena Dettmer has set out, in her important monograph, *Horace: A Study in Structure*, to consider this aspect of *dispositio* in Augustan poetry.<sup>26</sup> For the literary scholar, as for the art historian, a full understanding of *dispositio* can be highly illuminating. As Dettmer writes in her preface: "the primary focus is on structure as a tool for the literary critic. One member of a pair [of poems in a collection] often elucidates the interpretation of the other. Structure is essential to meaning" (p. xxv). The same principle may be seen at work governing the organization and meaning of a collection of poems as that governing the *dispositio* of the Galerie François I<sup>er</sup>. According to Dettmer, this principle is unlikely to be a simple one:

Books of poetry, like single poems, were so constructed that their organization is multi-faceted, with several unifying schemes simultaneously operative, superimposed one upon the other. (p. 4)

In a relatively short collection, such as Virgil's *Eclogues*, the order, though complex, is easy to grasp, not least because the poet himself points to it by means of thematic bonds and verbal echoes. Thus, Dettmer comes up with the following scheme, which relies on "a ring pattern based on similar and/or contrasting themes":

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<sup>26</sup> Published in Hildesheim: Olds, 1983.

	1	Expropriations in upper Italy
	2	Unrequited love
	3	Singing match
	4	<i>Laudatio</i>
	5	Death of Daphnis
	6	<i>Recusatio</i>
	7	Singing match
	8	Unrequited love
	9	Expropriations in upper Italy
	10	Gallus=Daphnis dying of love

Another point which Dettmer makes concerns the question of mathematical symmetry:

Whether one likes numbers or not... the fact remains that they exist. . . . They constitute a distinctive feature of virtually all Augustan poetry-books . . . and they reflect as well the conscious artistry characteristic of the period. The numerical schemes in the *Eclogues* illustrate the two most common types. A pattern may be created (1) by the sum of (or the difference between, as we shall see) the number of lines in *corresponding poems*, or (2) by the sum of (or difference between) the number of lines in *entire groups of poems*. (p. 7)

In the case of the *Eclogues*, Dettmer sees two patterns:

$$1 + 9 = 150, 2 + 8 = 181, 3 + 7 = 181, 4 + 6 = 149$$

and

$$1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 330; 6 + 7 + 8 + 9 = 331.$$

Such a preoccupation with structure, symmetry, and proportion is, as Terreaux has indicated, a feature of architecture,<sup>27</sup> and it may be that, for Renaissance writers as well as for some of the Augustan poets, Vitruvius was influential. Concerning *dispositio*, Vitruvius has the following to say:<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> See above, and n. 21.

<sup>28</sup> Cited in the translation of the Loeb edition by Frank Granger (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962).



Arrangement includes the putting of things in their proper places and the elegance of effect which is due to adjustments appropriate to the character of the work (*Dispositio autem est rerum apta conlocatio elegansque compositionibus effectus operis cum qualitate*). Its forms of expression are these: groundplan, elevation, and perspective. . . . All three come of reflexion and invention. Reflexion is careful and laborious thought, and watchful attention directed to the agreeable effect of one's plan. Invention, on the other hand, is the solving of intricate problems by means of brilliancy and versatility. These are the departments belonging under Arrangement.

Perhaps Ronsard has this definition in mind when he writes in the *Abbregé de l'art poétique françois* that "... la disposition despend de la belle invention, laquelle consiste en une elegante et parfaicte colloca-tion & ordre des choses inventées" (L. XIV. 14. 197-99).

It can be taken for granted, then, that balance and proportion would be an important feature in the arrangement of poems into a collection. But given the interest in Neo-Platonism in the Renaissance, and Ronsard's own fascination with it, one has to ask whether balance goes further than that. Rudolf Wittkower has shown how in Renaissance churches Pythagorean and Platonic principles of geometry and arithmetic, along with the idea of Man as microcosm of the universe, shaped the design of many buildings.<sup>29</sup>

For the men of the Renaissance this architecture with its strict geometry, the equipoise of its harmonic order, its formal serenity and, above all, with the sphere of the dome, echoed and at the same time revealed the perfection, omnipotence, truth and goodness of God.

However, it did not matter that an individual might fail consciously to perceive this harmony:

It is, according to Alberti, an inborn sense that makes us

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<sup>29</sup> *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (London: Warburg Institute, 1952), 27. See also Peter Sharratt, "The Imaginary City of Bernard Salomon," in *Intellectual Life in Renaissance Lyon: Proceedings of the Cambridge Lyon Colloquium, 14-16 April 1991*, ed. Philip Ford and Gillian Jondorf (Cambridge: Cambridge French Colloquia, 1993), 33-48, especially pp. 47-48.

aware of harmony; he maintains, in other words, that the perception of harmony through the senses is possible by virtue of this affinity of our souls. This implies that if a church has been built in accordance with essential mathematical harmonies, we react instinctively; an inner sense tells us, without rational analysis, that we perceive an image of the vital force behind all matter—of God Himself. (pp. 24–25)

The circle, of course, was considered the most perfect form, and so it is that a number of centralized churches were designed and constructed during the Renaissance, despite the fact that they are less convenient from the liturgical point of view than the basilica or Roman cross design. Wittkower sees Nicholas of Cusa as influential in this respect, visualizing God “as the least tangible and at the same time the most perfect geometrical figure, the centre and circumference of the circle; for in the infinite circle or sphere, centre, diameter, and circumference are identical” (p. 25). Ronsard echoes this notion in his *Hymne de l'Eternité* (L. VIII. 254. 127–34):

Tu est toute dans toy, ta partie & ton tout,  
 Sans nul commencement, sans meillieu, ne sans bout,  
 Invincible, immuable, entiere, & toute ronde,  
 N'ayant partie en toy, qui dans toy ne responde,  
 Toute commencement, toute fin, tout meillieu,  
 Sans tenir aucun lieu, de toutes choses lieu. . .

(You are whole within yourself, your part and your whole, with no beginning, no middle, and no end, invincible, immutable, complete, and wholly round, having no part in you which does not match within you, all beginning, all end, all middle, without occupying any place, the place of all things. . .)

Just as someone in a Renaissance church might fail to appreciate on a conscious level its essential harmony and consonance with God, so too, to cite McAllister Johnson, the Fontainebleau frescoes possess a clearly established complex circular *dispositio*, “whether or not their place in a larger scheme is immediately apparent.”<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the

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<sup>30</sup> “Once More the Galerie François I<sup>er</sup> at Fontainebleau,” 132.

highly complex musical patterns and choreography of court entertainments, such as Beaujoyeux's *Balet comique* of 1581,<sup>31</sup> fulfilled an important mystical function. As Margaret McGowan writes:

[Sixteenth-century writers] believed that cosmic influences could actually be drawn to affect human affairs, and they thought that by playing on the emotions of an audience through harmonies and movements finely calculated to echo those of the heavenly spheres their listeners and spectators could be moved to act peacefully.<sup>32</sup>

Ronsard clearly had certain principles in mind when he structured his various collections of poems, constantly rearranging them, rejecting certain compositions, reinstating others. It is also quite plausible that the principles of *imbrication* and *emboîtement* which are apparent in the structure of individual poems should be applied to entire collections, and that light may be shed upon the meaning of parallel poems as a result. In considering Ronsard's collections of hymns, we shall consider the principles which underlay the *dispositio* of individual books, as revealed by his later revisions, and in particular see whether purely aesthetic considerations are brought to bear, or whether there is a grander, more philosophical theory of harmony at work.

## Elocutio

We have seen that parallels between the visual arts and poetry are relatively easy to recognize in the areas of *inventio* and *dispositio*. But when we move on to *elocutio*, the style or means of expression employed in a work of art, then there is greater room for subjectivity. Despite or, perhaps, because of this, there have been frequent attempts in recent years to establish links between Mannerism, the prevailing style of the School of Fontainebleau, and French poetry of the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>33</sup> We are dealing here with a style whose origins lie very clearly in painting, and we are faced

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<sup>31</sup> This is available in a facsimile edition, edited by Margaret M. McGowan, as *Le Ballet comique by Balthazar de Beaujoyeux 1581*, Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, vol. 6 (Binghamton: MRTS, 1982).

<sup>32</sup> *Ideal Forms in the Age of Ronsard*, p. 230.

<sup>33</sup> See, in particular, Marcel Raymond and A. J. Steele, *La Poésie française et le maniérisme*.



with the problem of establishing the extent to which the term *Mannerism* can legitimately be applied to poetry.

Ronsard himself clearly thinks of *elocutio* in strongly visual terms:

Elocution n'est autre chose qu'une propriété & splendeur de paroles bien choisies & ornées de graves & courtes sentences, qui font reluyre les vers comme les pierres precieuses bien enchassées les doigts de quelque grand Seigneur.... Tu n'oubliaras les comparaisons, les descriptions des lieux ... te façonnant en cecy à l'imitation d'Homere, que tu observeras comme un divin exemple, sur lequel tu tireras au vif les plus parfaictz lineamens de ton tableau.<sup>34</sup>

(*Elocutio* is nothing other than proper signification and brilliance of carefully chosen words, adorned with serious, short aphorisms, which make the verse sparkle as finely mounted precious stones do the fingers of some great lord.... Do not forget comparisons, descriptions of places ... patterning yourself here in imitation of Homer, whom you will observe as a divine example, on the model of which you will draw from life the most accomplished outlines of your picture.)

Style, then, is adornment, something added to a work of art in order to make it more brilliant so that its essential beauty can appear all the more strikingly. In addition to this brilliance and "splendeur," Ronsard advises that:

tu te doibs travailler d'estre copieux en vocables, & trier les plus nobles & signifians pour servir de ners & de force à tes carmes, qui reluyront d'autant plus que les mots seront significatifs, propres & choisis.<sup>35</sup>

(you must strive to be copious in vocabulary, and pick the most noble and meaningful terms to serve as the sinews and strength of your poems, which will shine out all the more because the words will be meaningful, appropriate, and well-chosen.)

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<sup>34</sup> *Abbregé de l'art poétique françois* (L. XIV. 15. 216–20, 226–27, 230–33). My italics.

<sup>35</sup> *Abbregé*, ll. 222–26. My italics.



So, in addition to the brilliance already mentioned, the poet must be copious in his use of words while, nevertheless, observing the demands of poetic decorum and avoiding otiose vocabulary.

This concept of style does, in fact, conform to some of the main tendencies in Mannerism, which John Shearman has defined in terms of its extreme stylishness:

We require, in fact, poise, refinement and sophistication, and works of art that are polished, rarefied and idealized away from the natural.<sup>36</sup>

In addition, of course, virtuosity is an important feature of this style, a love of complexity and decoration akin to the *copia* to which Ronsard alludes in his own definition of *elocutio*. In the depiction of the human form, which is central to mannerist art, the *figura serpentinata*, with its sinuous shape, elongation, and use of *contrapposto* (the asymmetric arrangement of the parts of the body so that head, torso, and hips are in different planes) predominates (cf. fig. 7), but although nudity is the order of the day, jewellery, flowers, and elaborate hair styles all serve to adorn and emphasize human beauty.

In applying these elements of Mannerism to poetry, Marcel Raymond points to two features of Renaissance poetry which seem to be particularly in keeping with this style.<sup>37</sup> In the first place, he singles out the prominence given to *enargeia*, the graphic presentation of a scene through such devices as hypotyposis or ecphrasis in order to represent movement or fluidity as effectively as possible. Secondly, he mentions the extreme embellishment which is present in much Pléiade poetry, and which corresponds perhaps to the festoons of fruit and flowers and other decorative elements in mannerist paintings. But in order to see how far it is appropriate to apply the term mannerist to Ronsard's poetry, we shall attempt a synthesis of some of the particular characteristics associated with the style. In this respect, John Shearman's chapter on the application of the term to literature and music is useful in establishing a number of fields of comparison, which will be referred to in the discussion which follows.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Shearman, *Mannerism*, 19. See too Dubois, *Le Maniérisme*.

<sup>37</sup> Raymond, *La Poésie française et le maniérisme*, 25–27.

<sup>38</sup> Shearman, *Mannerism*, 135–70.

## Variety

Arising from its aims of refinement and sophistication, the mannerist style always has a tendency towards complex decoration and complicated *dispositio*, which, while heightening the audience's interest, can often lead to doubt and ambiguity. While this is something which can be linked with the influence of Neo-Platonism on *inventio*, it is by no means always evident when an item of detail is symbolic or merely decorative, or how, on a larger scale, the parts of an individual work are meant to combine to form a harmonious whole. As Shearman writes:

The emphasis on the parts rather than the whole in so many Mannerist works is in these terms positive and functionally expressive of a desired quality; it also has one very positive result, a generally beautiful and refined level of execution. . . . The emphasis on the parts is also, of course, a negative aspect of the preference for variety rather than unity.<sup>39</sup>

For this reason, we continue to be puzzled by the subjects of many mannerist paintings (which consequently may be given vague titles such as *Mythological Allegory*), while poems which are sometimes written off as being illogical or badly constructed can have a predetermined if highly obscure program, made less evident by the abundance of detail.

The decoration of the Galerie François I<sup>er</sup> is a good example of variety at work in the area of the visual arts, while *Des Peintures contenues dedans un tableau*, analysed above, is typical of an analogous process in the poetry of Ronsard. In epic poetry in particular, he considers variety to be essential:

Car la Poesie Heroïque qui est dramatique, & qui ne consiste qu'en action, ne peut longuement traicter un mesme sujet, mais passer de l'un à l'autre en cent sortes de varietez.<sup>40</sup>

(For epic poetry, which is dramatic and consists only of action, cannot for long deal with the same subject, but must pass

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<sup>39</sup> *Mannerism*, pp. 146 and 149.

<sup>40</sup> *La Franciade, Au lecteur apprentif* (L. XVI. 343).

from one subject to the other in numerous forms of variety.)

However, French Mannerism, as opposed to its Italian counterpart, never seems entirely to lose sight of an overall unifying principle, and it is typical that Ronsard should criticize Ariosto (whose *Orlando furioso* is cited by Shearman as an extreme example of variety)<sup>41</sup> on account of what Ronsard refers to as his "Poësie fantastique . . .

de laquelle les membres sont aucunement beaux, mais le corps est tellement contrefaict & monstrueux qu'il ressemble mieux aux resveries d'un malade de fievre continue qu'aux inventions d'un homme bien sain"

("fantastic poetry . . . whose limbs are to some extent beautiful, but whose body is so disfigured and monstrous that it resembles more closely the ravings of a patient sick with continual fever than the inventions of a sane man").<sup>42</sup>

But when Ronsard describes the way poets should write epic poetry, it is evident that richness of detail is all-important. They

ne cherchent que le possible: puis d'une petite scintille font naistre un grand brazier, & d'une petite cassine font un magnifique Palais, qu'ils enrichissent, dorent & embellissent par le dehors de marbre, Jaspe & Porphire, de guillochis, ovalles, frontispices & pieds-destals, frises & chapiteaux, & par dedans de Tableaux, tapisseries eslevees & bossees d'or & d'argent, & le dedans des tableaux cizelez & burinez, raboteux & difficile à tenir és mains, à cause de la rude engraveure des personnages qui semblent vivre dedans.<sup>43</sup>

(only seek out the possible; then, from a small spark they kindle a great blaze, and from a small cottage they make a magnificent palace, which they enrich, gild, and embellish on the outside with marble, jasper, and porphyry, with guilloches, ovals, frontispieces, and pedestals, friezes and capitals, and on

<sup>41</sup> Shearman, *Mannerism*, 145-46.

<sup>42</sup> *Les Quatre Premiers Livres de la Franciade, Au lecteur* (L. XVI. 4). Ronsard had expressed himself similarly in the *Abbregé de l'art poétique françois* (L. XIV. 12-13), discussed above.

<sup>43</sup> *Au lecteur apprentif* (L. XVI. 340).



the inside with pictures, raised tapestries embossed in gold and silver, and the contents of the pictures carved and engraved, uneven and difficult to hold in the hands because of the rough engraving of the figures which appear to come to life in them.)

Ronsard's ornate style, however well controlled he considered it, was a long way from the *clarté* which was so prized by Boileau and other literary critics of the classical age; despite this, decoration is seldom gratuitously ornate and, as we have seen, structure is complex but not haphazard. Ronsard would have learnt from his mentor, Jean Dorat, that all descriptive detail in inspired epic poetry is meaningful to the alert reader, and although the significance of such detail might not be immediately obvious, in accordance with the principle of the "voile bien subtil" (see chap. 1), it is nevertheless part and parcel of the text. Ronsard would vary the degree of obscurity in his poetry depending on genre and purpose. Inspired poetry in the grand style, such as the majority of the hymns, is characterized by complex structure and frequently erudite imagery; openly didactic poetry, such as the *Discours des miseres de ce temps* and his other polemical works of the early 1560s, is marked by greater clarity. As with style in general, it is decorum which determines how obscure or clear any given poem is likely to be.

## Abundance

Shearman cites Sperone Speroni's distinction between the brevity of Virgil, who "is therefore more of a historian than a poet," and the floridity of Homer, who "certainly gives delight by pleasingly ornamenting and amplifying his works."<sup>44</sup> Thanks to scholars such as Terence Cave,<sup>45</sup> it is unnecessary to emphasize the importance of *copia* in French Renaissance literature, including, of course, the poetry of Ronsard, and it is interesting to note that Ronsard too is interested in the Aristotelian distinction between history and poetry. However, although he says (L. XVI. 5):

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<sup>44</sup> See p. 151.

<sup>45</sup> See *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).



j'ay patronné mon œuvre [i.e., *La Franciade*] . . . plustost sur la naïve facilité d'Homere que sur la curieuse diligence de Virgile

(I have modelled my work on the natural facility of Homer rather than the scrupulous industry of Virgil)

it is clear that, like Scaliger and in contrast to Speroni, he admires many things in Virgil's style, and in particular his *copia*, whose effects mean that

Les excellens Poëtes nomment peu souvent les choses par leur nom propre. Virgile voulant descrire le jour ou la nuict, ne dit point simplement & en paroles nues, Il estoit jour, il estoit nuict: mais par belles circonlocutions,

*Postera Phœbea lustrabat lampade terras*

*Humentésque Aurora polo dimoverat umbras. . .*

(L. XVI. 333)

(The foremost poets seldom call things by their proper names. When Virgil wants to describe day or night, he does not say simply and in bare terms: "It was day, it was night"; but in fine periphrases: "The next day's Dawn was lighting the earth with Apollo's lamp and had dispersed the moist shadows in high heaven.")

One example of this *copia* is the description of Jeunesse (Hebe) in the *Hymne de l'Eternité*:

A ton dextre costé la Jeunesse se tient,  
Jeunesse au chef cresp, dont la tresse luy vient  
Flottant jusqu'aux talons par ondes non tondue,  
Qui luy frappe le doz en filz d'or estendue:  
Cette Jeunesse ayant le teint de roses franc,  
D'une boucle d'azur ceinte de sur le flanc,  
Dans un vase doré te donne de la dextre  
A boire du nectar, afin de te faire estre  
Tousjours saine & disposte, & afin que ton front  
Ne soit jamais ridé comme les nostres sont.

(L. VIII. 248-49. 39-48)

(On your right stands Hebe, curly-headed Hebe, whose unshorn locks float down in waves to her heels, striking her back, spread out in golden threads; this Hebe with her gracious rosy complexion, wearing around her flank an azure

belt, with her right hand gives you nectar to drink from a golden vessel, in order to keep you forever hale and hearty, so that your brow should never be wrinkled like ours.)

There is an important element of sensual detail in this description. Color is prominent in, for example, the gold of the hair and the vase, the blue belt, the rosy pink of the skin. Yet at the same time, these colors have their traditional iconographical meanings: gold as a symbol of nobility and incorruptibility, blue as the color of the heavens, thus representing eternity. We can also see the way in which poetry, through the use of metaphor or simile, can be even more allusive than painting. The hair is seen both in terms of liquid imagery ("Flottant . . . par ondes") and in terms of precious metals ("filz d'or"); the complexion is portrayed in terms of flowers ("le teint de roses"), thus introducing, through the image of the rose, a symbol of the beauty, delicacy, and ephemeral nature of youth. In other cases, a visual symbol is made explicit. Thus, we are told that Jeunesse's action of giving Éternité nectar to drink is intended to preserve her youth, and this message is conveyed both explicitly ("afin de te faire estre / Tousjours saine & disposte") and visually ("afin que ton front / Ne soit jamais ridé"). As in painting, then, detailing here serves both a sensual and a symbolic purpose, but we can observe the greater flexibility which poetry possesses and which marks its superiority over the purely visual.

Such *copia* in the visual arts is, of course, apparent everywhere in examples of mannerist works created for the French court, whether it be in the ornate decoration of Fontainebleau, the numerous designs for gold and silver ware, or the sculpture of the period (as, for example, the stucco work at Fontainebleau or the elegant works of Jean Goujon). There is something almost vegetal about this richness, and Erasmus says of it in the *De copia*:

Variety has everywhere such great force that there is nothing at all, however polished it may be, which does not seem uncouth without its support. Nature herself rejoices particularly in variety, for there is nothing anywhere in the immense multitude of things which she has left unpainted with the wonderful art of variety.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *Omnia opera* (Bâle: Froben, 1540), 1. 4.

However, when abundance is taken to extremes, it can lead to a taste for the bizarre, illustrated by the extravagances of Arcimboldo.

## Monstrosities

The sixteenth century's taste for the exotic and the monstrous in art is close in spirit to Baudelaire's conception of the beautiful: "le beau est toujours bizarre,"<sup>47</sup> a view which in the nineteenth-century poet's case could lead to such sensually macabre poems as *Une charogne*. Engravings from the School of Fontainebleau abound in which horrific scenes from classical mythology, history, or simply the imagination of the artist are depicted, and such extravagant scenes are common in Ronsard. One example is the description of the Harpies in *L'Hymne de Calais, et de Zetes* (L. VIII. 255-93):

... à tous ses repas les Harpies cruelles,  
 Demenans un grand bruict & du bec & des ailes,  
 Luy pilloient sa viande, & leur griffe arrachoit  
 Tout cela que Phinée à sa levre approchoit,  
 Vomissant de leur gorge une odeur si mauvaise  
 Que toute la viande en devenoit punaise.  
 Tousjours d'un craquetis leur machoire cliquoit,  
 Tousjours de palle fein leur bec s'entrechoquoit  
 Comme la dent d'un loup, quand la fein l'epoinçonne  
 De courre apres un cerf: la machoire luy sonne  
 L'une sur l'aulture en vain, & par l'air d'un grand bruict  
 Faict craqueter sa gueule apres le cerf qui fuit.  
 Ainsy bruioient les dents de ces monstres infames,  
 Qui du menton en haut sembloient de belles femmes,  
 De l'eschine aux oiseaus, & leur ventre trembloit  
 De fein, qui de grandeur un bournier ressembloit,  
 Et pour jambes avoient une acrochante griffe  
 En escailles armée, ainsy qu'un Hippogrife.

(lines 181-98)

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<sup>47</sup> Baudelaire, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. C. Pichois (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), 2 vols., 2: 578.



(at all his meals, the cruel Harpies, unleashing a great din with beak and wings, plundered his food, and their claws snatched away whatever Phineus brought to his lips, vomiting from their throats such a stench that all the food became rank. Always their jaws clicked and clattered, always their beaks chattered with bleak hunger like the tooth of a wolf, when hunger spurs it on to hunt a stag: its jaws knock together in vain, and with a loud din, it makes cracking noises in the air with its mouth after the fleeing stag. Such was the noise made by the teeth of these infamous monsters, which resembled beautiful women from their chins upwards, birds from their spine; and their bellies trembled from hunger, like a quagmire in size, and their legs were grasping claws armed with scales, just like a hippogriff.)

Ronsard's relish in the description of the Harpies is evident. He appeals to the full range of the senses: not only sight (lines 194–98) and hearing (lines 182, 187–93), but smell and taste (lines 185–86), and even touch (“une acrochante griffe / En escailles armée. . .,” lines 197–98). Yet at the same time, the picture forms an integral part of the narrative upon which Ronsard has embarked. Brevity and variety bring out the power of such descriptions, for it is important not to “extravaguer comme un frenetique,” and any incidental material must be “briesvement ecrites & de peu de discours” (L. XVI. 334).

## Obscurity

The grand style called for elevated diction, “paroles recherchees & choisies,” “Epithetes significatifs & non oisifs,” as Ronsard, still true at the end of his career to the spirit of the *Deffence et illustration*. . . , asserts (L. XVI. 334). In addition, he recommends poets to “prendre la sage hardiesse, & d’inventer des vocables nouveaux,” “de ne faire conscience de remettre en usage les antiques vocables, & principalement ceux du langage Vvallon et Picard,” and to coin new words on old roots (L. XVI. 348–49). However, this lexical inventiveness could easily result in obscurity, just as Ronsard's early use of abstruse mythological references and recondite intertextual allusion had led to similar complaints about the nature of his imagery in many of the *Odes*. Nevertheless, he does not see obscurity as a virtue, as we have



already seen, even if the inevitable consequence of some of his aesthetic choices is that his ideal audience must be composed of an intellectual elite.

Obscurity is, of course, evident in many paintings of the period. For example, in the *Allégorie* of the Louvre by Le Maître de Flore (fig. 8), the abundance of detail does little to elucidate the painting's meaning. Do the various flowers and plants have particular meanings, or are they purely decorative? Does the jewellery worn by the female figures and the sleeping Cupid (pearls, rubies) have its traditional significance—and if so, which of its various meanings—or is it merely conventional adornment? How far does the use of color (for example, Cupid's red wings) convey meaning? The key is lost to the modern spectator.

But to us no less than to the original audience, obscurity is a challenge, and Shearman remarks that "the same stimulating obscurity" as is present in the poetry of Tasso or the painting of Salviati, "flattering to the connoisseur who can interpret it, is characteristic of Mannerist architecture or stucco decorations" as well.<sup>48</sup> François Lecerle has also identified a delight in the enigmatic in the poetry of the École lyonnaise, where the solving of riddles, both explicit ones and those embodied in longer texts, was a clear source of intellectual pleasure.<sup>49</sup> It should come as no surprise, therefore, to see Ronsard offering his readers this sort of challenge in his more oracular poetry, including, as we shall see, a number of the *Hymnes*. Obscurity for its own sake is to be avoided, but the ludic element it contains could excite and stimulate.<sup>50</sup>

## Form, Content, and Decorum

The next characteristic of Mannerism mentioned by Shearman, the dichotomy between form and content where form (as in the poetic principles of *l'art pour l'art*) is the predominating factor, is not one

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<sup>48</sup> See p. 162.

<sup>49</sup> See "Énigme et poésie à Lyon au milieu du seizième siècle," in *Intellectual Life in Renaissance Lyon*, 135–71.

<sup>50</sup> This issue was the subject of a stimulating paper given by Alice P. Radin at the Third Meeting of the International Society for the Classical Tradition held at Boston University, 8–12 March 1995, entitled "*Choses difficiles sont belles*: Ronsard, Pindar, and Lycophron."

which Ronsard consciously adopts. It is true that he stresses the importance of adornment, but it is meant to serve a purpose, the enhancing of the subject matter: "Car le principal point est l'invention, laquelle vient tant de la bonne nature, que par la leçon des bons & anciens auteurs" (L. XIV. 5-6. 45-47). *Dispositio* and *elocutio* follow on from *inventio*; form must be subservient to content.

Similarly, the mannerist tendency to pay no heed to stylistic decorum (the idea that each type of subject has an appropriate style, form, etc.) is also one which Ronsard rejects. In the short posthumously published preface to the *Odes*, he writes: "Tu dois sçavoir que toute sorte de Poësie a l'argument propre & convenable à son subject" (L. I. 59), and we can see in his own works the way in which his style varies, from the grand style of the *Hymnes*, through the hyperbolic and emphatic style of the *Discours*, to the *style mignard* of the *Folastries*. If it is true that his shepherds are not given a suitably bucolic manner of speaking in the *Eclogues*, then we should perhaps remember that these are royal shepherds, and that Virgil himself only occasionally coarsens the speech of his own rustics.

Shearman sees the application of decorum most open to criticism in the religious works of art influenced by Mannerism,<sup>51</sup> and it is certain that a modern reader experiences most difficulty in appreciating poems such as the *Hercule Chrestien* (L. VIII. 207-23), which, true to the Renaissance spirit of syncretism, produce what to a twentieth-century reader appears to be an almost blasphemous mixture of the sacred and the profane. Indeed, this view was already held in the seventeenth century.

To sum up, then, Ronsard appears to share, particularly in his grand poetry, a number of the stylistic features of Mannerism, while diverging from it in other respects. A generally sophisticated style, characterized by variety, richness of detail, *copia*, and a taste for the bizarre is certainly something which he cultivated. On the other hand, his poetry, while at times difficult, is not gratuitously obscure

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<sup>51</sup> Summing up the objections of the Council of Trent, Shearman writes: "Mannerism in religious art is a double offence against the classical concept of decorum. First, it is art that does not primarily express the subject. . . . Second, Mannerism so often leads to exhibitions of nudity and artifice that are not only superfluous, in the functional sense, but also contrary in effect to what is proper to their position" (p. 168).

or beyond the understanding of the cultivated reader, even though it may at times present a challenge.

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This chapter has set out to consider points of comparison between Ronsard's poetic theory and practice and the visual arts in order to establish criteria which will enable a thorough assessment of the iconographic properties and the arrangement and structure of the *Hymnes*. Ronsard's hierarchy of poets and poetry, based on the presence or absence of inspiration and the relationship between art and genius, will have important implications for the interpretation of the *Hymnes*, while the possibility of Neo-Platonic principles being at work in the arrangement of both individual hymns and collections offers important exegetical clues. Style reinforces and complements the main features of his poetry. Before moving on to a detailed study of the *Hymnes*, however, we shall consider the two traditions of symbolism and myth identified by Plato and Proclus, which may be superimposed on those identified by Gombrich in relation to the visual arts: the didactic Aristotelian tradition and the mystical Neo-Platonic tradition. This will provide useful categories in which to assign the systems of imagery used by Ronsard in the *Hymnes*.

## CHAPTER 3

# *Ecphrasis and Hypotyposis*

Shall he who might cause this roof to ring with applause, and contribute his humble share to the splendors of the place, shall such a one content himself with examining and admiring its beauties without a word, and so depart, like one that is dumb, or silent from envy?

(Lucian, *The Hall*)

Two rhetorical devices stand out as forming a particularly close bond between poetry and the visual arts: ecphrasis and hypotyposis. Although definitions of the term ecphrasis may be more or less narrow in scope, I shall use the term to refer to the detailed description of a real or an imaginary work of art. As such, it is a device of which Ronsard was particularly fond, as it provided him with the opportunity to display his descriptive talents, in true mannerist fashion, and to introduce variety into his works. We find examples of ecphrasis throughout his poetic career, ranging from a few lines in length, as in the evocation of the Mars and Venus painting in *A son lict* (L. I. 258. 9–16), to a whole poem, such as *Des Peintures contenues dedans un tableau* (L. I. 259–64).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On the use of ecphrasis in Ronsard, see Terence Cave, "Ronsard's Mythological Universe," in *Ronsard the Poet*, ed. Terence Cave (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1973), 159–208; Françoise Joukovsky, *Le Bel Objet*, and my articles, "Ronsard the Painter," "La Fonction de l'ekphrasis," and "Ronsard's Erotic Diptych: *Le Ravissement de Cephale* and *La Defloration de Lede*," *French Studies* 47 (1993), 385–403. On the ecphrasis in general, see Murray Krieger, *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), who discusses the various definitions attached to the term in his opening chapter, "Picture and Word, Space and Time."



We shall use the term hypotyposis to denote the vivid presentation of a real or an imaginary scene "in such a way that it seems to be seen rather than heard."<sup>2</sup> It is obviously very similar to ecphrasis, the only difference being that hypotyposis sets out to show something which, in the narrative or descriptive context of the poem, is not an artificially created work of art. When Ronsard includes such descriptions in his poetry, he uses the same kind of technique as he does in examples of ecphrasis: in other words, his vision of the world continues to be colored by the visual arts.

Ecphrasis had a long and illustrious history in ancient literature, starting with the shield of Achilles (*Iliad* 18. 478–608), which Shearman describes as "the prototype of all literary *meraviglie*" (p. 146).<sup>3</sup> As a result of its appearance in Homer, the use of ecphrasis became inevitable in all subsequent epic poems (for example, Apollonius of Rhodes, 1. 721–67; Virgil, *Aeneid* 8. 626–731), while it became a recognizable genre in its own right in authors like Philostratus and Callistratus. In some instances, the descriptions were no doubt inspired by actual works of art; in others, they provided the basis for subsequent paintings and artifacts. In some cases, such as Lucian's description of the *Calumny of Apelles*, it is likely that an ecphrasis has acted as an intermediary for a lost work of art in forming the basis of a modern work.<sup>4</sup>

One important development in attitudes towards ecphrasis derives from the belief that its use in Homer serves an allegorical purpose.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Quintilian's definition is to be found at 9. 2. 40–1: "Ab aliis ὑποτύπωσις dicitur proposita quaedam forma rerum ita expressa verbis, ut cerni potius videatur quam audiri. . . . Nec solum quae facta sint aut fiant, sed etiam quae futura sint aut futura fuerint imaginamur."

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of ecphrasis in the ancient world, see Roger Hinks, *Myth and Allegory in Ancient Art*, Studies of the Warburg Institute (London, 1939); Paul Friedländer, *Johannes von Gaza und Paulus Silentiarius: Kunstbeschreibungen Justinianischer Zeit* (Berlin, 1912); Salvatore Nicosia, *Teocrito e l'arte figurata*, Quaderni dell'Istituto di Filologia Greca della Università di Palermo (Palermo: Bruno Lavagnini, 1968); Alain Billault, "Approche du problème de l'Ἐκφρασις dans les romans grecs," *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé* (1979), 199–204; and in the same volume, Philippe Heuzé, "Approche des images dans l'Ἐνείδε," 205–14; and also Krieger, *Ekphrasis*, especially chap. 2.

<sup>4</sup> See Lucian, *Slander*, and Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 177.

<sup>5</sup> See Félix Buffière, *Les Mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1973), 155–65.

In particular, it is Heraclitus the Rhetor's long discussion of the shield of Achilles (*Quaestiones Homericae* 43–44, 48–51) that establishes this notion in the Renaissance. In his view, Homer intended nothing less than to represent the origins of the universe and the creation of the earth when he described Hephaestus forging the shield. This view was known to Ronsard, who may be alluding to it briefly in the *Hymne de treschrestien roy de France Henry II de ce nom*, first published in 1555:

Adonque toy vestu, non des armes que feint  
Homere à son Achille, où tout le Ciel fut peint. . . .<sup>6</sup>  
(L. VIII. 36. 589–90)

(Then, dressed not in the armor which Homer devises for his Achilles, where all the heavens were depicted, you. . . .)

If Homer's shield of Achilles was considered to have had an allegorical function, Virgil's shield in book 8 of the *Aeneid* has a clearly "prophetic" function:

illic res Italas Romanorumque triumphos  
haud vatum ignarus venturique inscius aevi  
fecerat ignipotens, illic genus omne futurae  
stirpis ab Ascanio pugnataque in ordine bella.  
(*Aeneid* 8. 626–29)

(On it, the god of fire, who was not ignorant of the prophets or unknowledgeable about the future, had wrought the history of Italy and the triumphs of Rome, every branch of the race which would grow from Ascanius, and the wars fought in their right order.)

Ovid, on the other hand, has Minerva weave a warning for Arachne in his ecphrasis in *Metamorphoses* 6. 83–84:

ut tamen exemplis intellegat aemula laudis,  
quod pretium speret pro tam furialibus ausis. . . .

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<sup>6</sup> There are clear indications elsewhere in Ronsard's work that he was acquainted with Heraclitus, see my articles "Conrad Gesner et le fabuleux manteau," 316–17, and "Ronsard the Painter," 38–39 and 43.

(in order that her rival should know by examples of renown what reward to expect for such insane daring...)

Ronsard was aware of these functions: in his preface to the *Fran-ciade*, "Au lecteur apprentif," he recommends the use of ecphrasis as a prophetic device, while emphasizing the necessity for its careful integration in a poem and warning readers to look out for allegorical meanings:

le Poëte bien advisé, plein de laborieuse industrie, commence son œuvre par le milieu de l'argument, & quelquefois par la fin: puis il deduit, file & poursuit si bien son argument par le particulier accident & evenement de la matiere qu'il s'est proposé d'escire, tantost par personnages parlans les uns aux autres, tantost par songes, propheties & *peintures inserees contre le dos d'une muraille & des harnois, & principalement des boucliers*, ou par les dernieres paroles des hommes qui meurent, ou par augures & vol d'oiseaux & phantastiques visions des Dieux & de démons, ou monstrueux langages des chevaux navrez à mort: tellement que le dernier acte de l'ouvrage se cole, se lie & s'enchesne si bien & si à propos l'un dedans l'autre, que la fin se rapporte dextrement & artificiellement au premier point de l'argument. Telles façons d'escire, & tel art plus divin que humain est particulier aux Poëtes, lequel de prime face est caché au Lecteur, s'il n'a l'esprit bien rusé pour comprendre un tel artifice. (L. XVI. 336-37, my italics)

(The properly alert poet, full of diligent workmanship, begins his work in the middle of the plot, and sometimes at the end; then he devises, spins, and advances his plot so well by means of the individual circumstances and events of the subject which he has set out to write about, at one time by characters conversing with one another, at another by dreams, prophecies, and paintings set into the side of a wall and of armor, and particularly shields, or by the final words of dying men, or by auguries and flights of birds and fantastic visions of gods and demons, or unnatural speech of mortally wounded horses; in such a way that the final act of the work adheres, ties in, and interlocks so well and so appropriately together, that the ending relates skilfully and artistically to the first point of the



plot. Such ways of writing, and such artistry, which is divine rather than human, is peculiar to poets, being at first glance concealed from the reader, if he is not quick-witted enough to understand such craftsmanship.)

Ronsard's own ecphrases are of various kinds, however, and the remarks just cited refer only to epic poetry. Throughout his writings, the French poet works in both the didactic Aristotelian and the mystical Neo-Platonic traditions of symbolism. Some of his descriptions are of actual works of art, while others are imaginary or based on literary antecedents. Some of them portray possible works of art (given Renaissance conventions of pictorial narration), but others seem to go beyond the boundaries of what is possible in a purely visual representation. In examining examples of ecphrasis in Ronsard's work, we shall bear in mind these distinctions, and concentrate on examples taken from his grander, often narrative, poetry in order to see how this device may function in the *Hymnes*.

## Ecphrasis in the Didactic Tradition

As we have already seen, there is never anything particularly enigmatic in poetic descriptions which are produced in the didactic tradition, although in the visual arts, such symbolism can be included in works of an essentially Neo-Platonic nature and be an indispensable part of their overall interpretation. If we fail to recognize the significance of individual allegorical figures in a painting, we shall certainly be unable to interpret the work as a whole. The didactic ecphrasis was quite a popular genre with the poets of the Greek Anthology, and one of Ronsard's early examples is a French version of an epigram by Posidippus on a statue of Time.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the Greek Anthology poem had already inspired Alciati's emblem 122, *In Occasionem* (fig. 9), although here, the gender difference between *Καὶρὸς* and *Occasio* has provoked a corresponding sex change in the statue. Ronsard, however, remains faithful to the original in this particular detail.

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<sup>7</sup> Greek Anthology, 16. 275. Panofsky discusses the iconography of Time, or Occasio, in *Studies in Iconology: Humanist Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 69-93.



Qui, & d'où est l'ouvrier? Du Mans. Son nom? le Conte.  
 Et mais toy qui es tu? le Tems qui tout surmonte.  
 Pourquoy sur les ergos vas tu toujours coulant?  
 Pour montrer que je suis incessement roulant.  
 Pourquoy te sont les piedz ornez de doubles aisles?  
 Affin de m'en voler comme vent desus elles.  
 Pourquoy va ta main dextre un rasoïer touchant?  
 Pour montrer que je suis plus agu qu'un trenchant.  
 Pourquoy dessus les yeux voltige ta criniere?  
 Pour estre pris davant & non par le derriere.  
 Et pourquoy chauve? affin de ne me voir hapé,  
 Si des le premier coup je ne suis atrapé.  
 Tel peint au naturel le Conte me decueuvre,  
 Et pour toy sur ton huys a mis ce beau chef d'œuvre.

(L. V. 90-91)

("Who is the artist and where is he from?" "From Le Mans."  
 "His name?" "Le Conte." "And who are *you* then?" "Time  
 who conquers all." "Why are you always sliding on your  
 heels?" "To show that I am perpetually on the move." "Why  
 are your feet adorned with double wings?" "In order to fly off  
 on them like the wind." "Why is your right hand touching a  
 razor?" "To show that I am sharper than a blade." "Why is  
 your lock of hair floating over your eyes?" "In order to be  
 caught at the front and not from behind." "And why are you  
 bald?" "In order not to be grabbed, if I am not caught first  
 time round. Thus painted after nature Le Conte displays me,  
 and has set up this fine masterpiece for you on your door.")

The French version differs in two major respects from the Greek poem: the Greek sculptor Lysippus of Sicyon has been replaced by Ronsard's friend, Nicolas Denisot (1515-1559), a somewhat shadowy figure whose career included the activities of poet, artist, cartographer, and spy;<sup>8</sup> consequently, the sculpture becomes a painting; and the heavily didactic ending of the original (*καὶ ἐν προθύροις θῆκε*

<sup>8</sup> See Enea Balmas, "Un poeta francese in Inghilterra nel cinquecento," in *Critical Dimensions: English, German and Comparative Literature Essays in Honor of Aurelio Zanco*, edited by Mario Curreli and Alberto Martino (Cuneo: Saste, 1978), 21-38.

διδασκαλίην—"and he placed [me] at the front door as a warning") is omitted by Ronsard. As far as the first point is concerned, it is impossible (and unimportant) to know whether Denisot, who as an artist was best known for his pastel portraits, did ever produce such a work, or whether Ronsard is simply using his name to give an updated version of the epigram. On the second point, Ronsard achieves his didactic purpose by stressing that the picture is placed "pour toy sur ton huys." The Greek poem is simply addressed to a passing stranger (cf. *ξεῖνε*, line 12). In this description, all the details concerning the image are carefully explained. Some are obvious (the winged feet), others at first sight are less so (the razor, the forelock), but when explained are unforgettable, thus fulfilling the didactic purpose of the symbolism.

Ronsard is still working in this tradition in his description of Love in the sonnet *Amour, qui si long tams...*

Sur un Terme doré je te peindrai tout nu,  
En l'air un pié levé, à chaque flanc une aelle,  
L'arc courbé dans la main, le carquois sous l'esselle,  
Le corps gras & douillet, le poil cresse & menu.<sup>9</sup>

(L. VI. 47. 5-8)

(I shall paint you quite naked on a gilded pillar, with one foot raised in the air and a wing at each side, your drawn bow in your hand and your quiver under your armpit, with a chubby, dainty body and thin wavy hair.)

This time, however, the discovery of the allegorical significance of the various attributes is left to the reader, although classical antecedents (especially Propertius, 2. 12), Renaissance poems (e.g., Marullus, *Epigrams* 1. 58), and paintings would have made the symbolism clear. Love is naked because lovers cannot cover up their madness; he is winged because love is fickle and fast-moving; the bow and arrows signify both the sudden wounding lovers suffer when they first contemplate the beauty of the beloved (often seen as shafts emanating from the eyes), and the great pain of love; and the boyish attributes symbolize the lover's childlike imprudence. It is in particular the pain of love that the poet stresses in the rest of the sonnet.

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<sup>9</sup> On the iconography of Cupid, see Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, 95-128.

Still in the didactic tradition, Ronsard also devotes some of his ecphrases to imaginary buildings, in the manner of Virgil, *Aeneid* 1. 446–93 and 6. 14–41. One example, an encomiastic piece entitled *La Vertu amoureuse*, presents a description of a temple, a device which Ronsard had already used in the 1555 collection of *Hymnes in Le Temple de Messeigneurs le Connestable, et des Chastillons* (L. VIII. 72–84), and which we shall discuss below. *La Vertu amoureuse* is dedicated to Girolamo della Rovere, the beloved of Virtue:

Au plus haut du sommet de ce rocher pointu,  
 Est un temple d'airain qu'a basti la Vertu,  
 D'airain en est la porte, & par grand artifice  
 D'airain plus cler que verre est parfaict l'edifice.  
 Là, de tous les costez de ce grand Univers  
 Les peuples sont assiz en des sieges divers:  
 L'un bas & l'autre haut en son rang y habite,  
 Et chacun a son lieu selon qu'il le merite.

(L. X. 337–38. 11–18)

(At the topmost summit of this pointed crag is a bronze temple built by Virtue: its door is bronze, and the building is completed, with great craftsmanship, in bronze which is brighter than glass. From all points of this great universe, the nations are sitting there in various seats: one dwells below and the other on high according to his rank, and each has his place according to his just deserts.)

The significance of the symbolism is quite apparent: to attain Virtue, you must ascend a steep rocky crag, but once there, her temple is an eternal one, bronze being a symbol of durability (as in Horace, *Odes* 3. 30. 1, “aere perennius”). The glassy brightness of the temple probably represents the idea of truth and wisdom, as mirrors traditionally symbolize the reflection of divine truth.

In all these cases of didactic ecphrasis, whether Ronsard has literary or pictorial models in mind, the message—didactic, encomiastic, or merely playful—has been clear, the reader being spared the necessity of going beyond conventional systems of iconographical symbolism. Moreover, the relevance of these descriptions to the central message of the poems has been obvious. The same will not necessarily be true for ecphrases in the Neo-Platonic tradition.



## Ecphrasis in the Neo-Platonic Tradition

Whereas the sources for didactic symbolism tend to be of a general rather than a specific nature, often representing the amalgam of a number of different literary and iconographical traditions, in the case of Neo-Platonic images, there are usually one or more particular texts that underlie them. In painting as in poetry, it is crucial to discover these texts if the spectator or reader wishes to appreciate the deeper significance of the work of art, and not remain at the level of contemplating its superficial beauty. We have already noted, however, that in the Neo-Platonic tradition appearances can be notoriously deceptive, and the more shocking the image presented, the more mysterious its essential message is likely to be.

Such is probably the case with an early Ronsard ode, *A son licé* (L. I. 257–59). At first sight, the poem seems to be little more than a celebration of the bed where the poet has enjoyed the pleasures of love with Cassandre.<sup>10</sup> However, a short ecphrasis is introduced of a painting of Mars and Venus which, because of its specific details, is more than a facile comparison, and yet makes no overt demand on the reader to consider it as particularly significant.

Qui a point veu Mars & Venus  
 Dans un tableau portraits tous nus,  
 Des dous amours la mere estroitement  
 Tient Mars lassé, qui laisse lentement

Sa lance tumber à costé  
 De si douce force donté,  
 Et la baisant presse l'ivoire blanc  
 Bouche sur bouche, & le flanc sur le flanc.

(lines 9–16)

(Who has not seen Mars and Venus portrayed quite naked in a picture; the mother of sweet Cupids tightly clings to an exhausted Mars, who negligently drops his lance at his side, overcome by such gentle force, and as he kisses her, he puts

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<sup>10</sup> This is true of one of the possible models mentioned by Laumonier, Ariosto, *Rime* 4, *Capitoli* 8, "O piu che'l giorno" (see the edition of the *Lirica*, edited by Giuseppe Fatini [Bari, 1924]).



his weight on her white ivory, with his mouth on her mouth,  
his side against hers.)

Obviously, the erotic content of such a picture is an important factor in evoking for the reader the heroic sight of the poet in bed with his beloved. Moreover, the Mars/Venus prototype, in addition to being a popular subject of painting in its own right, also lies behind pictures of other heroic couples such as Alexander the Great and Roxane (fig. 10) and Odysseus and Penelope.<sup>11</sup> However, the allegorical meaning of the painting would have been clear to educated people in the Renaissance.

The evocation of the adultery of Ares and Aphrodite by the bard Demodocus in the *Odyssey* (8. 266-366) was generally considered to be the most shocking of the Homeric myths, unless it was read allegorically. Heraclitus the Rhetor and Proclus offer similar explanations. Heraclitus' more straightforward version (*Homeric Allegories* 69. 8-10) is as follows:

For [Homer] seems from this to confirm the ideas of the Sicilian school and the opinion of Empedocles, calling Ares discord and Aphrodite friendship. Homer has demonstrated then these two originally separated principles, after their long-standing strife, mixing together in a single unity. Hence, logically, from both of them has been born Harmony, the universe having been harmonized in a calm and measured way.

Proclus devotes several pages to the myth (*In Rempublicam* 6. 141-43), explaining that Ares is the principle of separation in the world, who needs the unifying powers of Aphrodite to arrange contrary forces. "The Universe also needed, as it seems, an association of the kind, so that opposites could be harmonized and that the war inher-

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<sup>11</sup> For Mars and Venus compositions, cf. Botticelli's painting in the National Gallery, London, and Piero de Cosimo's in the Staatliche Museen, Berlin-Dahlem, as well as Fontainebleau engravings by L. D. (Zerner, L. D. 72) and Jean Mignon (Zerner, J. M. 38). The Alexander and Roxane composition, described in an ecphrasis by Lucian (*Herodotus or Aetion*, 5), was painted by Il Sodoma in the Villa farnesina (Rome) and by Primaticcio in the Chambre de Madame d'Estampes at Fontainebleau, who also painted Ulysses and Penelope in the Galerie d'Ulysse (cf. the oil painting in the Toledo Museum, Ohio, and details in Sylvie Béguin et al., *La Galerie d'Ulysse à Fontainebleau*).

ent in the Cosmos should finally end in peace." This principle of unification and harmonization seems to lie behind the picture with which Ronsard presents us, where Mars, overcome by Venus' "si douce force," abandons the (no doubt phallic) symbol of his bellicose nature, the lance. This helps to explain the curious opening stanza:

Lict, que le fer industrieus  
D'un artisan laborieus  
A façonné, t'honorant d'un tel tour  
Qu'a ce grand monde en vouste tout autour.  
(lines 1-4)

(Bed, fashioned by the diligent tool of an assiduous craftsman, honoring you with such a canopy that it contains this great vaulted universe all around it.)

The bed has become a symbol of the whole universe, and the love of the poet and his mistress is a copy, albeit an imperfect one, of the union of Mars and Venus. Through the *fureur* of love, man can attain the harmony necessary for the apprehension of divine truths. It is perhaps for this reason that Ronsard deplures the absence of the bed from the heavenly constellations:

Hà que grand tort te font les dieus  
Qui ne te logent en leurs cieus,  
Tu leur ferois plus d'honneur que ne font  
Un Chien, un Cancre, & deus Ours qui i sont.  
(lines 25-28)

(Oh! what a great wrong the gods do you in not placing you in their heavens; you would do them greater honor than a dog, a crab, and two bears, which are there.)

We have already looked at another poem to his mistress from *Le Bocage* (L. VI. 52), where Ronsard promises to reward the god of sleep, Morpheus, by hanging an ex-voto picture on his bed if the god consents to give the poet a vision of Cassandre:

Sur le haut de mon lict en vœu je t'apendrai,  
Devot, un saint tableau, sur lequel je peindrai  
L'heur que j'aurai reçu de ta forme douteuse,  
Et comme Jupiter à Troye fut deceu

Du Somme & de Junon, apres avoir receu  
De la simple Venus la ceinture amoureuse.

(lines 9–14)

(I shall piously hang up for you as a votive offering on the top of my bed a sacred picture, on which I shall depict the good fortune I shall have received from your uncertain image, and how Jupiter at Troy was deceived by Sleep and Juno, after she received the amorous girdle of simple Venus.)

The “saint tableau” is, in fact, going to portray another of the most shocking incidents in Homer, the seduction of Zeus by Hera on Mount Ida (*Iliad* 14. 153–351). Ronsard had already described this scene at greater length, as we have seen, in *Des Peintures contenues dedans un tableau* (L. I. 259–64. 49–66), interpreting the story, in accordance with Heraclitus the Rhetor’s explanation (*Homeric Allegories*, 39), as an allegory of the onset of spring caused by the union of the hot upper air (Zeus) with the cooler lower air (Hera).<sup>12</sup> In the case of the sonnet, however, this interpretation does not work, and we have to turn to Proclus to discover the significance of the myth. According to him, Zeus symbolizes the demiurge, or Intelligence acting on the world, and Hera stands for creative fecundity. Their union on Mount Ida (the hypercosmic world of Ideas), although described in terms of a single incident, actually represents an eternal state. So, the ex-voto painting is “saint” not through its ostensible subject (where as in the poem *A son licé* the human couple is assimilated with the divine), but through its transcendent meaning, which represents the mystery of creation.<sup>13</sup>

The two examples of ecphrasis we have considered so far have been quite short evocations of famous subjects, whose literary antecedents were also well-known. As a result, Ronsard needed only a few words and details to conjure up the whole scene in his readers’ minds. However, there are many instances in his poetry where the scenes he evokes are less well-known, or completely imaginary, in which case, a longer description is called for. We have already dis-

<sup>12</sup> See my article “Ronsard the Painter,” 38–39.

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of the Proclus passage (*In Rempublicam* 6. 132–40), see Buffière, *Les Mythes d’Homère*, 544–48.



cussed the detailed allegorical picture presented in *Des Peintures contenues dedans un tableau*.<sup>14</sup> Another relatively early work, *La Harangue que fit Monseigneur le duc de Guise aus soudards de Mez* (L. V. 203–19) contains several detailed descriptions of the scenes engraved upon the Duke's armor.<sup>15</sup>

François de Guise is presented on the ramparts of Metz, putting on his armor in preparation for the defense of the city against the Holy Roman Emperor. Ronsard is thinking here of the passage in the *Iliad* (11. 16ff.) where Agamemnon similarly dresses for battle. First, François, like the Greek leader, puts on his cuisses and greaves, which are joined at the knee by a device in the form of a snake (lines 37–40):

Sur le pli du genou erroit un grand serpent  
Qui des tortis brisés de son ventre ranpant  
Faisoit le mouvement de cète genouilliere,  
Le bordant de sa queüe en lieu de cordeliere.

(Where the knee bent, there curled round a great snake which, with the interrupted undulations of its crawling belly, acted as a joint for this genouillere, guarding it with its tail in place of a tie.)

If, as seems likely, the snake is wound around the knee joint in a circle, we have here the ouroboros, a symbol of the eternal cycle of birth, death, and resurrection.

The corslet which François puts on next has a rather more detailed design (lines 41–74). Just below the gorget, Pope Urban II is engraved, sending off the various Christian princes on the first Crusade (1096–99), including Godefroi de Bouillon who, as Laumonier explains, was claimed by the Guise family as an ancestor. He is depicted selling Verdun, Metz, and Bouillon to finance his expedition. He is also seen leading his troops into battle:

Au milieu des Soudars la sanglante Bellone  
D'un fer rouillé portraite horriblement felonnie

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<sup>14</sup> In "Ronsard the Painter," and chapter 2.

<sup>15</sup> For the background to this poem and details of other works written in celebration of the victory over Charles V, see my article "George Buchanan's Court Poetry and the Pléiade," *French Studies* 34 (1980): 142–47. See also Margaret McGowan, *Ideal Forms*, 103–14.



Erroit avec Discorde, & d'un foet sonnant  
Aloit de ses Guerriers les cœurs époinçonnant.

(lines 63–66)

(In the midst of the soldiers, bloody Bellona, depicted in rusty iron as horrifically cruel, was roaming with Discord, and with cracking whip was goading the hearts of her warriors.)

These lines recall a similar scene, to which Ronsard had already alluded in *Des Peintures contenues dedans un tableau* (L. I. 264. 89–90), on the arms presented by Venus to Aeneas in *Aeneid* 8. 700–703:

... saevit medio in certamine Mavors  
caelatus ferro, tristesque ex aethere Dirae,  
et scissa gaudens vadit Discordia palla,  
quam cum sanguineo sequitur Bellona flagello.

(Mars rages in the midst of the battle, engraved in iron, and the grim Furies from the upper air, and Discord, rejoicing, marches on, her robe torn, followed by Bellona with her bloody whip.)

A seabattle is also engraved on the corslet, which shows the death of Canbaran d'Oliferne,<sup>16</sup> the capitulation of Antioch, Nicaea, Tyre, and Sydon, and the final success of Godefroi who "de toute la Judée étoit peint comme Roi" (line 74)—in fact, although offered the crown of Jerusalem, he accepted only the title of "avoué du Saint-Sépulcre."

Thus, the corslet both serves as a reminder of past glories of the Guise family, and perhaps also suggests a comparison with the events depicted on the shield of Aeneas, in particular with the final scene of the defeat of Anthony and Cleopatra by Augustus (*Aeneid* 8. 675–719). In this way, it acts as a visual exhortation just as the opening of the duc de Guise's speech to his men does, recalling past glories and promising future victory:

Pource amis prenés cœur, imités vos aïeus,  
Encore Dieu nous aime, encore Dieu ses yeus

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<sup>16</sup> Ronsard refers to this giant also in an elegy to Charles IX (L. XIII. 135. 89), see Laumonier, note 3.

N'a detourné de nous, ni de nôtre entreprise,  
 Ainçois plus que devant la Gaule il favorise,  
 La Gaule il favorise, & favorisera  
 Tant que nôtre bon Roi son gouverneur sera.

(lines 121-26)

(God still loves us, God has still not turned aside his gaze from us or from our undertaking, but rather he favors Gaul more than before, he favors Gaul, and he will continue to favor her so long as our good king is her governor.)

The Duke then takes up his "merveilleuse targe," on which the imagery is not so explicit. On it:

... du fils d'Aristor  
 Estoient gravés les yeus en cent étoiles d'or.  
 Deux couleuvres d'acier dos à dos tortillées,  
 Trainant dedans le fer leurs traces écaillées  
 Couroient le long du bord, qui d'un col replié  
 Ressenbloient de couleur à cét Arc varié,  
 Que Jupiter atache au milieu des nuages  
 Tout courbe, pour servir aux hommes de presages.

(lines 77-84)

(... the eyes of Aristor's son were engraved as a hundred golden stars. Two steel snakes, entwined back to back and trailing in the iron their scaly path, ran around the edge, and with their folded necks they seemed to be of the same color as that many-hued bow which Jupiter fastens, fully bent, in the midst of the clouds, to serve as an omen to men.)

The center of the shield is in the shape of a three-headed Gorgon (lines 85-88), while elsewhere are depicted Charles d'Anjou and René d'Anjou, two more ancestors of the Guise family, both presented as kings of Naples (lines 89-92).

As elsewhere in Ronsard's poetry, the image of the rainbow is introduced, on this occasion with an explicit statement that its property is to "servir aux hommes de presages," in order to alert the reader to an allegorical message in the text. Many of the details on the shield are borrowed from the passage in the *Iliad* (11. 15-46) depicting Agamemnon's weapons. The rainbow serpents are taken from

Agamemnon's breastplate: "dark blue snakes writhed up towards the neck, three on either side, like rainbows that the son of Kronos hath set in the clouds" (lines 26-28). Similarly, the Gorgon's head is also suggested by Homer. Agamemnon's shield has embossed on it "the Gorgon fell of aspect glaring terribly, and about her were Dread and Terror. And from the shield was hung a baldric of silver, and thereon was curled a snake of cyanus; three heads interlaced had he, growing out of one neck" (lines 36-40); compare Ronsard's lines 85-88:

Du milieu de l'écu Gorgone s'élevoit  
Borgnoiant renfrongné, qui trois testes avoit  
Naissantes d'un seul col, & de chacune teste  
Grongnante, vomissoit la foudre & la tempeste.

(From the middle of the shield reared up the Gorgon, scowling and frowning, having three heads growing out of a single neck, and from each growling head vomiting forth thunder and tempest.)

Ronsard would have found in Eustathius' *Commentaries* a detailed explanation of the shield as a model of the universe, just like Heraclitus' explanation of the shield of Achilles.<sup>17</sup> The stars engraved on the shield (in Agamemnon's shield they are bosses) are both representations of the stars in the sky and of Zeus's eyes, for as Eustathius reports:

The bosses, they say, suggest the stars. And such is claimed by the allegorists, who say too that the king's shield beautifully portrays the heavens, which Homer first said resembled Olympian Zeus's eyes and head. (Eustathius, 828. 40)

The two entwined snakes around the circumference of the shield, in addition to being symbols of the rainbow or messenger of the gods, also represent the universe, and may stand for the cyclical nature of Time and Fate. The Gorgon in the middle of the shield, according to Eustathius, stands for the fear which the bearer inspires, while the military successes at Naples of yet more ancestors of the Guise family need no explanation.

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<sup>17</sup> See Buffière, *Les Mythes d'Homère*, 164-65.

Thus, the overall meaning of the shield seems to be that he who puts his trust in God, the ruler of the universe, will have nothing to fear about the outcome of any battle. Again, this theme is taken up in the duc de Guise's exhortation to his troops, lines 127–40, as, for example, in the opening lines:

Donque ne craignés point tel peuple de Gendarmes:  
Mais chacun se fiant plus en Dieu qu'en ses armes,  
Droit opose sa pique au-devant du guerrier  
Qui viendra sur la brèche au combat le premier.

(Therefore have no fear of such a race of soldiers; but let each man, trusting more in God than in his weapons, set his lance directly to meet the warrior who first comes into the breach to fight.)

The helmet (lines 93–104), gleaming like a fire sweeping through a field of corn, depicts the struggle between Hercules and Antaeus, a popular subject in Renaissance sculpture and painting (see, for example, fig. 11). Ronsard was soon, of course, to devote an entire hymn to the *Hercule Chrestien* (in 1555, see L. VIII. 207–23), where the pagan hero is seen as an antetype of Christ. Although Antaeus is not mentioned by name in the later poem, Hercules' defeat of the various monsters and giants he encountered is regarded as an allegory of Christ overcoming vice (lines 173–82). However, the pagan demigod was also seen as an image of France (as in L. XV. 397),<sup>18</sup> and Antaeus simply as the enemy (*ἀνταίωδς* meaning "contrary" or "hostile"). This is made clear by Ronsard in his verse explanation of the imagery used in the 1571 entry of Charles IX into Paris:

Bien que tout ennemy de France  
Touchast sa terre comme Anthé  
Pour faire issir en abondance  
Un peuple aux armes redouté  
Il sera tousiours surmonté.  
Car la France qui ne recule  
Pleine d'un courage indomté

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<sup>18</sup> See Marc-René Jung, *Hercule dans la littérature française du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle de l'Hercule courtois à l'Hercule baroque*, THR 79 (Geneva: Droz, 1966), p. 92, n. 63.



Resemble un magnanime Hercule  
Plus forte en son adversité.

(Even if any enemy of France should touch their land like Antaeus to bring out in profusion a race feared in battle, they will always be overcome. For unflinching France, full of untamed courage, is like a stout-hearted Hercules, stronger in adversity.)

Again, this theme is picked up in the duc de Guise's speech, lines 113-17:

Sus, courage Soudars, sus, sus, montrés vous or'  
De la race d'Hercule, & de celle d'Hector:  
Hercule, après avoir l'Espagne surmontée  
Vint en Gaule épouser la Roine Galatée,  
Dont vous estes issus. . .

(Come, take courage, Soldiers, come, come, now show yourselves to be the descendants of Hercules and of Hector: Hercules, after conquering Spain, came to Gaul to marry queen Galatea, from whom you are descended. . .)

Even the simile (lines 94-96) can be read allegorically: the helmet is like heaven-sent fire which cheats the ploughmen (Charles V and his army) of the harvest they are expecting to reap, the city of Metz ("... qui des chams va pillant / Les épis desja meurs, lors que parmi les plaines / Des laboureurs fraudés le ciel gâte les peines" ["... which ravages the now-ripe ears of corn in the fields, when in the plains the heavens ruin the toil of the cheated farmers"]). A similar symbolic meaning can be seen in the comparison concerning François's dagger, which has a martial gleam to it: "Plus que l'astre de Mars épendoit de lumiere" (line 108).

So an allegorical reading of the iconography of the arms of the duc de Guise provides a unity to the poem which is otherwise lacking, offering an example of what I have termed elsewhere the paradigmatic function of the ecphrasis:<sup>19</sup> the various motifs, recalling past deeds of glory and pointing to future victory, act as a paral-

<sup>19</sup> See my paper "La Fonction de l'*ekphrasis* chez Ronsard," 85-87.

lel to the words spoken by the commander to his men, anticipating what he will say. Although the allusions are wide-ranging, their significance is not excessively obscure, providing the reader is prepared to consider their context and allegorical significance. However, while purporting merely to describe the armor, Ronsard also uses the medium of poetry to suggest rather more than engravings in gold, silver, and steel could do: color is an important feature of the description ("Sa robe étoit de pourpre...", line 49; "... rougissoit l'autre bord," line 70; "Ressenbloient de couleur à cét Arc varié...", line 82); emotions are attributed to engraved figures ("Vis-à-vis de ce pape engravés en or fin / Tressailloient d'alegresse EUSTACE & BAUDOIN / Et LE COMTE DE FLANDRE...", lines 54-56); and the apparently arbitrary order in which the various pieces of armor are taken (cuisses and greaves, including knee joint; corslet; shield; helmet; sword; dagger) has more to do with their allegorical significance than with a realistic depiction of how they would have been put on. Like Virgil, in his description of Aeneas' shield, Ronsard outdoes the plastic arts in his allusiveness and emotional range.

Another genre where ecphrasis is found in the ancient world is bucolic poetry,<sup>20</sup> and Ronsard has a number of pieces in which he describes the scenes depicted on baskets, cups, shepherds' crooks, lyres, and other pastoral artifacts. One such is to be found in the eclogue *Daphnis et Thyrsis* (L. XII. 146ff.), where the two classical names are pseudonyms for Charles IX and his brother, the future Henry III.

In an early section of the poem, Thyrsis describes the wooden cup which he will wager in a singing contest:

... Une vigne descent	32
Tout à l'entour des bords, qui, de raisins chargée,	
Est de quatre ou de cinq pucelles vandangée:	
L'une tient un panier, l'autre tient un cousteau,	
Et l'autre de ses pieds presse le vin nouveau,	36
Qui semble s'écouler dans la tace profonde.	
A l'ombre de la vigne est une Nymphé blonde	
A cheveux deliés, qui se couvre le flanc	

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<sup>20</sup> Examples may be found in Theocritus, 1. 29-56, Moschus, 2. 43-62, and Virgil, *Eclogues* 3. 36-42, 44-46.

Et le corps seulement d'un petit linge blanc. 40  
 Deux Satyres cornus sont au pres de la belle,  
 Qui ont les yeux enflés de trop veiller pour elle,  
 Blessés de son amour: mais, peu se chaillant d'eux,  
 Quelque fois de sur l'un, quelque fois sur les deux, 44  
 Mignarde son regard & se prend à sourire,  
 Leur donnant le martel, & ne s'en fait que rire.  
 Un pescheur est assis au bord du gobelet,  
 Qui courbé fait semblant de getter un filet 48  
 Dans la mer pour pescher, puis de toute sa force  
 Et des mains & des pieds & de veines s'efforce  
 De le tirer sur l'eau: ses muscles, grands & gros,  
 S'enflent depuis son chef jusqu'au bas de son dos, 52  
 Tout le front luy degoute, & bien qu'il soit vieil homme,  
 Le labeur toutesfois ses membres ne consomme.  
 Son reth est dessoubs l'eau, & diriés à le voir  
 Qu'en tirant il ahanne, & ne le peut r'avoir. 56

(A vine hangs down all around the edges, laden with grapes, and is being harvested by four or five young girls: one is holding a basket, another a knife, and another is treading with her feet the new wine, which appears to flow into the deep cup. Shaded by the vine is a blond nymph with loosely-flowing hair, whose side and body are covered only by a small piece of white linen. Two horned satyrs stand next to this beauty, their eyes swollen from watching out for her too much, wounded with love for her; but, taking little thought for them, she casts wanton glances and begins to smile at one time on one of them, at another on both, causing them to throb with passion, and all she does is laugh about it. A fisherman is sitting on the edge of the goblet and, bending over, makes as if to fling a net into the sea to catch fish, then with all his might he strains with hands and feet and veins to draw it over the water: his great big muscles swell from his head to the base of his back, his brow is completely covered in sweat, and, although he is an old man, the effort does not, however, consume his limbs.)

Ronsard clearly has in mind literary models for this ecphrasis, in particular Theocritus, *Idylls* 1. 29–56, where a similar cup is waged



by a goatherd.<sup>21</sup> This cup has a scene containing a beautiful woman who is gazed at by two handsome, love-lorn youths, and another scene of an old but vigorous fisherman dragging in a net. (The pseudo-Hesiodic *Scutum* contains a similar fisherman-scene in lines 213–15.) It is probably Homer's shield of Achilles that provides Ronsard with the grape-harvest details (cf. *Iliad* 18. 561–72).

Are we presented with a simple example of literary imitation and adaptation here for the purpose of adornment, or is Ronsard using these scenes to convey some meaning? The literary sources are not particularly helpful, although the scholia on Theocritus and Homer may offer some indication. The wine-making scene around the rim of the cup clearly evokes Bacchus. Perhaps we have an allusion here to the inspirational properties of wine, made all the more likely as the Homeric scene has references to the vintagers working to the sound of a boy singing. Eustathius says of this: "Joy-giving Dionysus displays his properties not only in wine, but also consoles with music, taking away weariness in the grape-gathering."<sup>22</sup> Similarly, the second scene (where Theocritus' youths have been turned by Ronsard into satyrs) represents the effects of love. An enigmatic comment in the scholia to Theocritus says: "some people say [the woman] is Pandora."<sup>23</sup> If so, she may be a symbol, as is the case with the first scene, of abundance, Pandora being understood in the etymological sense of "all-giving." In Henry II's entry into Paris in 1549, a figure of Pandora, representing the city of Paris, was placed in a colonnade (fig. 12):

vestue en Nymphe, les cheveux espars sur ses espaulles, & au demeurant tressez à l'entour de sa teste ... & faisant contenance d'ouvrir de l'une de ses mains un vase antique seulement remply de tous les heureux presens des puissances celestes, non des infortunez.<sup>24</sup>

(dressed as a nymph, with her hair flowing over her shoulders, and moreover plaited around her head ... and making a ges-

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<sup>21</sup> On Theocritus' ecphrases, see Salvatore Nicosia, *Theocrito*. Nicosia believes that Theocritus is describing an actual work of art, cf. p. 22.

<sup>22</sup> Eustathius, vol. 4, 97–98.

<sup>23</sup> *Scholia in Theocritum vetera*, ed. Carolus Wendel (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1967), 40.

<sup>24</sup> See McFarlane, *Entry of Henri II*, fols. 11<sup>v</sup>–12<sup>r</sup>.



ture as if to open with one of her hands an ancient vase filled solely with all the blessed gifts of the heavenly powers, and none of the unfortunate ones.)

Do we then have in this scene a depiction of the powerfully inspirational effects of the erotic frenzy? Finally, in the fishing scene, Ronsard stresses the effort of the fisherman, and his strength, despite his old age. Once more, there is an image of abundance here—the net is difficult to pull in because it is so full of fish. But perhaps this is also an allusion to the effort needed to create. The cup, the reward for poetry, depicts symbolically the process of poetic creation.

If this ecphrasis has clearly literary models, another of Ronsard's descriptions of a goblet is inspired by both a literary work and an actual picture. In the *Bergerie*, composed for performance at Fontainebleau in the spring of 1564, Navarrin (the ten-year-old Henri de Navarre) describes a cup in his possession (L. XIII. 85–87). One of the central motifs depicts a satyr trying to rape a nymph:

Presque tout au millieu du gobelet est peint  
Un Satyre cornu, qui brusquement estreint  
Tout au travers du corps une jeune bergere,  
Et la veut faire choir desouz une fougriere. 184

Son couvrechef luy tombe, & a de toutes pars  
A l'abandon du vent ses beaux cheveux espars,  
Dont elle courroucée, ardente en son courage  
Tourne loing du Satyre arriere le visage, 188  
Essayant d'eschapper, & de la dextre main  
Luy arrache le poil du menton & du sein,  
Et luy froisse le nez de l'autre main senestre,  
Mais en vain car tousjours le Satyre est le maistre. 192

Trois petitz enfans nuds de jambes & de bras  
Taillez au naturel, tous potelez & gras  
Sont gravés à l'entour: l'un par vive entreprise  
Veut faire abandonner au Satyre la prise, 196  
Et d'une infante main par deux & par trois fois  
Prend celle du bouquin & luy ouvre les doids.  
L'autre plus courroucé, d'une dent bien aiguë  
Mord ce Dieu ravisseur par la cuisse peluë, 200  
Se tient contre sa greve, & le pinse si fort  
Que le sang espandu souz les ongles en sort,

Et fait signe du doïd à l'autre enfant qu'il vienne,  
Et que par l'autre jambe ainsi que luy le tienne. 204

(Almost in the very middle of the goblet is depicted a horned satyr, who is fiercely thrusting himself against the body of a young shepherd girl, and wants to make her fall beneath a clump of fern. Her kerchief is slipping, and her beautiful flowing hair is streaming in all directions at the wind's caprice. She is enraged at this, and, ardent in her courage, is turning her face far away from the satyr, trying to escape, and with her right hand she is pulling out the hairs of his chin and chest and is crushing his nose with the other left hand, but to no avail, for the satyr still has the upper hand. Three small children, with bare legs and arms, carved after nature, all chubby and fat, are engraved around: one is trying energetically to make the satyr abandon his hold, and with childish hand, twice and thrice grasps the lecher's hand and opens his fingers. Another child, being more enraged, with sharp tooth is biting this violent god in his hairy thigh, and standing against his leg, is pinching him so hard that blood flows out beneath his nails, and he gestures with a finger to another child to come and to hold him by the other leg, just like himself.)

This passage, as well as being inspired by Sannazzaro's *Arcadia* 4,<sup>25</sup> is also quite an exact description of an engraving by Fantuzzi (fig. 13), believed by Zerner to date from 1542–1544, and clearly inspired itself by Sannazzaro's text. However (and this is neither in the *Arcadia* nor in the engraving, but is perhaps inspired by a sculpture by Sansovino [fig. 14] given to Francis I in 1540), the third boy is intent on pulling a thorn from his foot, watched by a heifer:

Une jénisse aupres luy pend sur le talon  
Qui regarde tirer le poignant eguillon  
De l'espine cachée au fond de la chair vive,  
Et tellement elle est à ce fait ententive 212  
Que beante elle oublye à boire & à manger:

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<sup>25</sup> See p. 28 in the edition of the *Opere volgari* edited by Alfredo Mauro (Bari: Laterza, 1961).

Tant elle prend plaisir à ce petit berger,  
 Qui tirant à la fin la pointe de l'espine,  
 De douleur se renverse & tombe sur l'eschine. 216

(A heifer is hard on his heels, watching the extraction of the stinging goad of the thorn buried deep in the living flesh, and she is so intent on this that, open-mouthed, she forgets to eat or drink, so much does she take pleasure in this little shepherd who, finally drawing out the point of the thorn, rolls over backwards in pain.)

There is a companion piece to this ecphrasis in the description of the scenes depicted on a shepherd's crook, spoken by Guisin (the thirteen-year-old Henri de Guise). A nymph is portrayed on the crook, intent on arranging her hair, with a boy sitting at her feet:

Aux pieds de ceste Nymphe est un garçon qui semble  
 Cueillir des brins de jonc & les lier ensemble, 260  
 De long & de travers courbé sur le genou:  
 Il les presse du poulce, & les serre d'un noud,  
 Puis il fait entre deux des fenestres egalles,  
 Façonnant une cage à mettre des Cygalles. 264  
 Loing derriere son dos est gisante à l'escart  
 Sa panetiere enflée, en laquelle un Renard  
 Met le nez finement, & d'une ruze estrange  
 Trouve le desjeuner du garçon & le mange: 268  
 Dont l'enfant s'apperçoit sans estre courroucé,  
 Tant il est ententif à l'œuvre commencé.

(At the feet of this nymph is a boy who appears to be collecting rushes and tying them together in a criss-cross, bending over his knee; he presses them with his thumb, and tightens them with a knot, then he makes evenly-spaced gaps between them, fashioning a cage for cicadas. His bulging lunch basket is lying to one side a long way behind him, into which a fox is cunningly sticking its nose, and in an unusual trick finds the lad's lunch and eats it, which the boy notices without anger, so intent is he on the work he has begun.)

This scene is modelled very closely on Theocritus, 1. 45–54 as well as on the ecphrasis in chapter 4 of the *Arcadia*.



Pastoral poetry, with its thinly disguised real-life figures masquerading as nymphs and shepherds, had since Theocritus and Virgil been recognized as a supremely allegorical genre. In addition to cloaking historical events (as happens in Virgil's first *Eclogue* with the rural expropriations), such poetry was also closely associated with prophecy (*Eclogue* 4 was long considered to be a messianic prophecy), as well as the revelation of universal truths (*Eclogue* 6). It comes as no surprise to see Ronsard using the pastoral genre in these ways.

In the case of the *Bergerie*, it is the French religious wars that are uppermost in Ronsard's mind, and the function of ecphrasis in this poem is, once again, paradigmatic. The song of Orléantin, the future Henry III, emphasizes this:

Quel estrange malheur! quelle amere tristesse  
 Vous tenoit, ô forest, quand la blonde jeunesse      324  
 Qui boit les eaux du Rhin, d'un estrange harnois  
 Efroyable efroyoit le país Champenois!  
 Puis enflée de l'espoir d'une fauce victoire  
 Beut en lieu de son Rhin les eaux de nostre Loyre,      328  
 Et osa, se fiant à l'infidelité  
 Du peuple, menacer nostre grande Cité!

(What unheard-of disaster! what bitter grief held you, oh forests, when the blond-haired youths who drink the waters of the Rhine, terrifying in their foreign armor, terrified the Champagne region! Then swollen up with the hope of a false victory they drank instead of their Rhine the waters of our Loire, and trusting in the treachery of the common folk, dared to threaten our great city.)

As Laumonier explains, this is an allusion to the German mercenaries who had come to reinforce the Protestant army of Condé and Coligny in 1562. Read in this light, it seems clear that, in the first ecphrasis, the nymph being raped by the satyr and defended by two young children represents innocent France, attacked by the immoral forces of Protestantism, but defended by some of her subjects. Others, however, represented by the third boy, are more interested in their own petty problems, "Sans se donner soucy de celuy qui l'appelle" (line 208). A similar image of negligence punished is depicted on the shepherd's crook. The boy, intent on constructing his cicada



cage, does not even care that a fox (again, an obvious symbol for the Protestants) is stealing his food.

As for the nymph who is also depicted on the shepherd's crook, drying her hair in the sun, she too may be a symbol of divided France:

Elle fait d'une main semblant de ramasser  
 Ceux [i.e., ses cheveux] du costé senestre, & de les  
retrousser  
 En frizons sur l'oreille, & de l'autre elle alonge  
 Ceux du dextre costé mignotés d'une esponge, 256  
 Et tirés fil à fil. . .

(With one hand she appears to be gathering up the hair on the left-hand side, and to be tucking it up into curls over her ear, and with the other she is smoothing out the hair on the right-hand side, gently stroked with a sponge, and drawn out thread by thread. . .)

The elaborately arranged hair on the left, inauspicious side and the more natural hair on the right side probably represent the contrast between artifice and false appearance on the one hand and natural innocence on the other.

One of Ronsard's most famous examples of ecphrasis occurs in the poem addressed *A Monsieur de Belot*, subsequently entitled *La Lyre* (L. XV. 15–38). We have already seen that the opening of this poem deals to a large extent with the nature of inspiration and the Platonic *fureurs*,<sup>26</sup> so it is quite natural that Ronsard should include some Neo-Platonic mysteries in the scenes depicted on his lyre, described in the second half of the poem (lines 295–456). (The instrument Ronsard has in mind is, from the details of the description, more likely to be a lute or viol than what we would call a lyre. The Latin term *lyra* could at that time refer to either instrument.)

The first of these scenes (lines 301–26) depicts Apollo, banqueting amongst the other gods and, through his singing and lute-playing,

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<sup>26</sup> See above, chap. 2. In a paper given at the Third Meeting of the International Society for the Classical Tradition (Boston University, 8–12 March 1995), "Ronsard, Horace, and the Dynamics of Poetic Creativity," Donald Gilman suggested that this poem may be modelled on the sixteen-line Horatian *Ode* 1. 32.

bringing harmony to the quarrel between Minerva and Neptune over which of the two should be the tutelary deity of Athens. Rosso had produced a composition based on this subject, which is preserved in engravings by Fantuzzi and Boyvin (fig. 15) and is modelled on the ecphrasis of Minerva's tapestry (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 6. 70–82).<sup>27</sup> Although disputes between the gods were considered to be examples of the more shocking kind of myth, unsuitable for the young, Ronsard in this case reveals to his readers the mystical meaning of this myth, thereby alerting them to further mysteries within the poem. Pallas, with her olive tree, embodies peace (line 319), Neptune, with his stallion, stands for war (line 322). Like Venus and Mars, then, they represent the two opposing forces in the universe which are maintained in equilibrium by Apollo, who symbolizes harmony.

The second scene, of Apollo and Marsyas, is not explained:

Au naturel dans l'ivoire attaché	
Est un Marsye au corps tout escorché,	328
Qui de son sang fait un fleuve en Phrygie,	
Punition d'oser sa chalemie	
Plus que le Luc d'Apollon estimer.	
Vous le verriez lentement consommer	332
Mourant par art, & d'une face humaine	
N'estre plus rien qu'une large fontaine.	

(Hanging in a natural manner in the ivory is a Marsyas, his body entirely flayed, creating a river with his blood in Phrygia, a punishment for daring to prize his reed-pipe above Apollo's lute. You would see him slowly being consumed, dying through art, and from a human shape being no more than an abundant fountain.)

However, the subject was a popular one with Renaissance artists (see, for example, fig. 16)<sup>28</sup> and Ronsard had already pointed to its alle-

<sup>27</sup> It is thought unlikely that the nineteenth-century painting of this scene, now to be found on the west wall of the Galerie François I<sup>er</sup>, is a restoration of any sixteenth-century composition. Ovid's description of Minerva bears a close resemblance to the statue of Athene in the Parthenon (cf. Pausanias, 1. 24. 7).

<sup>28</sup> Works by Parmigianino representing the story were engraved by Fantuzzi (Zerner, A. F. 76 a and b).

gorical meaning earlier in the poem. The dedicatee of *La Lyre*, Belot, is compared by Ronsard first to the Silenus figures, and secondly to "un Marsyas despouillé de ses veines" (line 189). In other words, external appearances hide true inner beauty, or as Erasmus wrote of the Silenus figures: "When closed they represented some ridiculous, ugly flute-player, but when opened they suddenly revealed the figure of a god."<sup>29</sup> However, it was necessary for Marsyas to be stripped by Apollo of his ugly external appearance for the beauty of his soul to shine forth. Edgar Wind observes:

Like Silenus, Marsyas was a follower of Bacchus, and his flute was the Bacchic instrument for arousing the dark and uncontrollable passions that conflict with the purity of Apollo's lyre. The musical contest between Apollo and Marsyas was therefore concerned with the relative powers of Dionysian darkness and Apollonian clarity.<sup>30</sup>

The third scene contains a picture of Apollo and Neptune at work building Troy. But whereas the latter must have recourse to brute strength, Apollo's music makes the rocks move of their own accord. The god sings of:

... come au bruit de ses nerfs bien tenduz  
 Mille rochers de leur bon gré fenduz 340  
 Suivoient du Lut la corde non commune,  
 Où dix à peine alloient apres Neptune,  
 Un Dieu grossier de mœurs & de façons,  
 L'autre le Roy des vers & des chansons. 344

(... how at the sound of his taut strings a thousand rocks, split of their own volition, followed the rare chords of the lute, where scarcely ten followed Neptune, a god who is coarse in his habits and ways, the other being the king of poetry and song.)

Once again, we see Apollonian harmony at work here, with the god building Troy in the same way that Amphion built Thebes. Commenting on *Odyssey* 11. 260–63, Dorat had explained that Amphion's

<sup>29</sup> *Adagia*, 3. 3. 1. See also Wind, *Pagan Mysteries*, 171–76.

<sup>30</sup> Wind, *Pagan Mysteries*, 172–73.



singing symbolized his skills in mathematics and engineering, and that Thebes had seven gates in imitation of the seven planets or of the seven notes of the scale, or of Mercury "qui lyram septem chordarum composuit in honorem 7. Pleiadum" ("who devised the seven-stringed lyre in honor of the seven Pleiades").<sup>31</sup> Horace (*Ars poetica* 39) allegorizes the Amphion myth by saying that it was his lyre-playing and coaxing prayers ("sono testudinis et prece blanda") that persuaded men to build the city. Ronsard would probably have been aware of all these interpretations.

The next scene (lines 351-72), depicting Apollo's love for the mortal Admetus, which led him to guard the young king's sheep and cattle, is rarely a subject for the visual arts. The love motive for Apollo's shepherding is also unusual, probably deriving from Callimachus' hymn to Apollo, lines 47-54, and taken up by the Roman elegiac poets.<sup>32</sup> Normally, it is Zeus's punishment of Apollo for killing the Cyclopes that brings about his servitude to Admetus.

In this picture of sexual proliferation, we see the union of the poetic frenzy with the erotic frenzy: Apollo, the god of poetry, like Venus in the Lucretian passage to which Ronsard is alluding here, presides over the rut of the animals in his care.<sup>33</sup> Callimachus too had emphasized the abundance and fertility which resulted from Apollo's care of Admetus' animals. Ronsard would certainly have had in mind here the procreation of physical and spiritual offspring which Socrates considers to be the purpose of love (*Symposium* 208-9), Apollo being responsible, in this case, for both kinds.

The next scene is very clearly iconographic in its inspiration (see, for example, fig. 17), even if the movement of the last two lines would render it virtually impossible to represent in a single picture:

Pres Apollon main à main estoient peintes  
Les corps tous nuds des trois Charites jointes  
Suivant Venus, & Venus par la main  
Conduit Amour, qui tire de son sein

376

<sup>31</sup> See MS A184 in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan, fol. 8<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> See G. Solimano, "Il mito di Apollo e Admeto negli elegiaci latini," in *Mythos: scripta in honorem Marii Untersteiner* (Genoa: Fratelli Pagano, 1970), 255-68.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Lucretius, 1. 10-20, part of the opening invocation to Venus as the personification of the creative forces of nature.



Des pomes d'or, & come une sagette,  
 En se jouänt aux Charites les jette  
 A coup perdu: puis au sein il se pend  
 D'une des trois, & la baize en enfant. 380

(Close to Apollo side by side were depicted the quite naked bodies of the three Graces, who were intertwined and following Venus, and Venus is leading Amor by the hand, who draws from the folds of her garment golden apples, and, like an arrow, throws them in play at random at the Graces; then he hangs from the breast of one of the three, and kisses her like a child.)

This picture clearly represents the Neo-Platonic concept of love, where the Graces stand for the three-fold unity of Venus. The circle formed by the three Graces, holding hands, no doubt represents Ficino's circle of love. They symbolize the converting triad *pulchritudo/amor/voluptas*, where beauty, like the golden apples, emanates from the hands of a deity.<sup>34</sup> The god of love is probably hanging from the breast of the middle Grace, Amor. Apollo is not entirely forgotten, however. He is standing close to this scene (line 373), and the apple is sacred to Apollo as well as to Venus.

All these scenes are engraved on the back of the lyre, the "ventre orgueilleux" (line 300). On the front are depicted two more scenes. On the first:

Vit un Bacchus potelé gros & gras,  
 Vieil jouvenceau, qui tient entre ses bras 384  
 De l'Abondance une corne qui semble  
 S'enorgueillir de cent fruits tous ensemble,  
 Qui surpassoient les levres du vaisseau  
 En gros trochets. 388

(There is the living image of a chubby, big, fat Bacchus, an aged youth, holding between his arms a cornucopia, which appears to boast a hundred fruits all together, overflowing the lips of the container in great clusters.)

<sup>34</sup> For the iconographical aspects of the subject, see Wind, *Pagan Mysteries*, 36-52.

Bacchus is surrounded, then, by symbols of fertility and abundance, representing the riches that derive from the Bacchic frenzy. It is difficult to know whether all the fruits mentioned by Ronsard possess a symbolic value, but some certainly do. The fig tree (line 393), as well as being sacred to Bacchus, is androgynous, representing both the phallus (the leaves) and the vulva (the fruit). Grapes too, of course, are Bacchic, and may here represent the frenzy of intoxication (line 397), while the cucumber is clearly phallic. On the other hand, chestnuts are traditional symbols of chastity, no doubt both for etymological reasons (*chastaigne/chaste*) and because of their protecting thorns (lines 400–401).<sup>35</sup> The peach stands for salvation and the cherry for good works (lines 401–3), while the strawberry is associated by Ronsard with female sexuality (line 408). Apricots, being self-fertilizing, are symbols of androgyny. Perhaps the significance of all this is summed up in lines 411–14:

Entre la Guerre & la Paix est ce Dieu,  
Ny l'un ny l'autre, & s'il tient le millieu  
De tous les deux, ensemble pour la lance,  
Ensemble propre à conduire une danse.

(This god stands between war and peace, being neither one nor the other, yet he is midway between both, well-suited both for the lance and for leading a dance.)

The androgynous, ageless Bacchus, then, embodies the union of opposites, a *discordia concors*, of which the result is fecundity.<sup>36</sup>

The final scene engraved on the instrument (lines 415–56) represents the myth concerning the invention of the lyre by Mercury. The god is presented holding his caduceus, yet another symbol with its two entwined snakes of the reconciliation of opposites. In Homeric allegory, Hermes represents the *logos* in all its meanings: speech, reason, and, in the Christian era, the divine word.<sup>37</sup> It is as divine mes-

<sup>35</sup> See Christine Scollen-Jimack, "Ronsard's Vanishing Cheese," 112.

<sup>36</sup> On Ronsard's use of Bacchus, see the excellent article by Terence Cave, "The Triumph of Bacchus and its Interpretation in the French Renaissance: Ronsard's *Hinne de Bacus*," in *Humanism in France at the End of the Middle Ages and in the Early Renaissance*, edited by A. H. T. Levi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1970), 249–70.

<sup>37</sup> Dorat speaks of Mercury as representing "ratio" in his explanation of the *Odyssey*, fol. 9<sup>r</sup>.

senger that Ronsard presents the winged god in lines 419–24. As for the invention of the lyre (lines 425–40), this is linked with Mercury's civilizing effect on Man. As Natalis Comes would later remark:

He is said to have been the first to teach men letters, and the courses of the stars, and to have given laws, through which men were shaped to humanity; and he was responsible for giving things names, and he invented musical instruments, and discovered everything pertaining to learning and knowledge.

(*Mythologiae* [Venice, 1567], 5. 5, fol. 137<sup>r</sup>)

In receiving the lyre from Mercury, Apollo gains the gifts of music and speech, which in turn are now in the possession of Ronsard.

Laumonier is right, then, to describe the poem as a virtual hymn to Apollo (L. XV. 38) as the god of harmony. The various scenes on the lyre mark a progression from heavenly harmony to the divine gift of musical and artistic harmony to mortals. Although the number seven is not mentioned specifically, it would have been in the minds of contemporary readers, as we have seen in the Dorat passage cited above.<sup>38</sup> There is a correlation between the celestial harmony of the seven planetary spheres (the moon, Mercury, Venus, the sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn), the seven strings of Mercury's lyre, the seven notes of the scale, and the seven poets of the Pléiade.

In a poem, too, which has overt references to Plato's theory of the four types of *mania*, the presiding deities, Apollo, Bacchus, and Amor, are to the fore in the scenes on the lyre, all reinforcing the unmentioned frenzy of the Muses. Apollo's part, as god of prophecy and harmony, is clear. Bacchus, however, also brings his assistance to the Muses:

Ceres nourrist, Bacchus rejouïst l'homme,	
C'est pour cela que bon Pere on le nomme:	
Or pour autant que ce Pere Evien	
A bonne part au mont Parnassien,	44
Portrait sacré dans le Temple des Muses,	
Pour ses vertus en noz ames infuses,	
Comme prophete, & poëte, & vineux	
Je l'honorois d'artifice soingneux. . .	48

<sup>38</sup> See note 31.



(Ceres gives food and Bacchus brings cheer to man, which is why he is called good father. Now, in so far as this father Euhius partakes fully in Mount Parnassus, as a sacred portrait in the Temple of the Muses, on account of his virtues which are poured into our souls, as prophet, poet, and wine-drinker, I honored him with careful artistry....)

Love too leads to the procreation not only of flesh-and-blood children, but also of spiritual children such as poetry:

Le grand Platon en ses œuvres nous chante  
Que nostre Esprit comme le corps enfante  
L'un, des enfans qui surmontent la mort,  
L'autre, des filz qui doivent voir le port                   120  
Où le Nocher tient sa gondolle ouverte  
A tous venants....

(The great Plato recites to us in his works that our spirit, like our body, gives birth, in one case to children who conquer death, in the other, to sons who must see the harbor in which the Pilot keeps his ferry-boat open to all comers....)

Once again, Ronsard uses ecphrasis to illustrate themes that he has developed more explicitly in other parts of the poem, exploiting both well-known motifs from the visual arts and also somewhat rarer subjects.

So far, we have seen examples of the Neo-Platonic ecphrasis in a number of genres of poetry. However, given its Homeric origins, Ronsard would certainly have viewed its presence in the epic as indispensable. A relatively early example appeared in the brief description of Castor and Pollux's cloak in the epyllion *L'Hymne de Calais, et de Zetes* (L. VIII. 263-64. 141-62),<sup>39</sup> while a number of them appear in the four books of the *Franciade*.

For example, book 1 contains a single ecphrasis depicting a cloak given in similar circumstances to that of the Dioscuri (L. XVI. 80-81. 1015-42). Andromache had made it originally for her husband,

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<sup>39</sup> For a discussion of this, see my article "Ronsard et l'emploi de l'allégorie," 99-101, and below, chap. 6.



Hector, but she is seen handing it over to her son Francus, as he sets out on his divinely-inspired voyage of discovery:

Disant ainsi, pour present lui donna	
Un riche habit que sa main façonna,	1016
Où fut portraite au vif la grande Troye	
En filetz d'or jointcs aux filets de soye,	
Avec ses murs, ses rempars & ses forts:	
Xanthe trainoit à l'environ des bords	1020
Pour passement sa riviere azurée:	
Là s'eslevoit la montagne sacrée,	
Ide neigieuse, où d'argent sautelloit	
Meint vif ruisseau qui en la mer couloit.	1024
Au pié du mont fut en riche peinture	
Le beau Troyen, qui chassoit d'avanture	
Un cerf au bois, où Jupiter le vit,	
Qui par son aigle en proye le ravit.	1028
Ce jeune enfant emporté par les nuës	
Tendoit en vain vers Troye les mains nuës:	
En l'air ravy ses chiens qui le voyoient	
L'ombre de l'aigle & les vents aboyoient!	1032

(With these words she presented him with a rich cloak which her hand had fashioned, on which was depicted a living likeness of mighty Troy in interwoven gold and silk thread, with its walls, ramparts, and strongholds. Xanthus trailed its azure river around the edges by way of braiding; on it rose up the holy mountain, snowy Ida, where many a swift stream, flowing into the sea, cascaded down in silver. At the foot of the mountain, richly painted, was the handsome Trojan, who happened to be hunting a stag in the woods; Jupiter saw him there and snatched him up as prey with his eagle. This young boy, carried through the clouds, was vainly stretching out his bare hands towards Troy; his dogs, seeing him snatched up into the air, were barking at the eagle's shadow and the wind!)

The details of this description of the rape of Ganymede derive, as Laumonier indicates, from a similar ecphrasis by Virgil (*Aeneid* 5. 250–57), which includes allusions to mount Ida, deer-hunting, and the barking dogs. This had given rise to a number of Renaissance paint-

ings on the subject, such as that of Correggio, now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, but originally painted at Mantua c. 1528 for Federigo III, as well as to engravings such as that of Alciati, emblem 4 (fig. 18).<sup>40</sup>

The usual allegorical interpretation of the myth is that God, in love with the beauty of Ganymede, who represents the mortal soul, bears it off to heaven, freed from its bodily prison. The barking dogs symbolize the baser human desires, left behind on earth, and Ganymede is also interrupted while hunting a stag, which is another symbol of sexual desire. The mention of Mount Ida may, as elsewhere in Ronsard, allude to the proximity of the hypercosmic world of Ideas. Thus, the robe may be a statement about the fate of the dead Hector, the first owner, and the future destiny of Francus. However, in his commentary on *Aeneid* 5. 250ff., Donatus sees the gift as representing "Aeneae pietas iuxta paternam memoriam." In his view, the dogs barking for their master "quem iam in aeris altitudinem raptum liberare non poterant" ("whom they were now unable to free, as he had been carried away high in the air") are symbols of fidelity rather than concupiscence.<sup>41</sup> The similar circumstances surrounding the giving of the cloak in the *Franciade* make it likely, then, that Ronsard also sees the weaving of the robe as an act of *pietas* by Andromache towards her dead husband.

Another example of Ronsard's use of ecphrasis in the *Franciade* occurs in book 3, and represents a scene which is also frequently depicted by Renaissance artists. Venus, disguised as a priestess of Hecate, approaches Hyante in her bedchamber, upbraids her for not declaring her love for Francus, and surrounds her bed with her magic girdle, or *cestos*. This belt, given to Venus by Nature, marks the sacred marriage between Vulcan and Venus, the demiurge and Beauty, necessary, as Proclus explains, "to induce beauty in sentient creatures, which makes this world as beautiful as possible."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> On the subject of Ganymede in the visual arts, see Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, 213–18; Egon Verheyen, "Correggio's *Amori di Giove*," *JWCI* 29 (1966): 160–92; and James M. Saslow, *Ganymede in the Renaissance: Homosexuality in Art and Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

<sup>41</sup> Donatus' commentary was printed in *P. Virgilii Opera* (Venice: Juntae, 1544).

<sup>42</sup> See Proclus, *In Rempublicam*, sixth essay, 141.

En la tissure estoient portraits au vif  
 Deux Cupidons: l'un avoit un arc d'if 628  
 Au trait moussu, qui tire aux fantaisies,  
 Craintes, soupçons, rancueurs et jalousies,  
 L'autre de palme avoit l'arc decoré,  
 Son trait estoit à la pointe doré, 632  
 Poignant, glissant, dont il cache dans l'ame  
 Et verse au sang une gentille flame  
 Qui nous chatouille, et nous fait desirer  
 Que nostre genre entier puisse durer. 636  
 Là fut Jeunesse en longs cheveux portraite,  
 Forte, puissante, au gros cœur, la retraite  
 Des chaux desirs: Jeunesse qui toujours  
 Pour compaignie amène les amours: 640  
 Comme un enfant pendoit à sa mammelle  
 Le Jeu trompeur, la Fraude, et la Cautelle,  
 Les Ris, les Pleurs, les Guerres et la Paix,  
 Treves, discords, et accords imparfaits, 644  
 Et le Devis qui deçoit noz courages,  
 Voire l'esprit des hommes les plus sages.

(In the weaving were the living likenesses of two Cupids: one had a bow made of yew, with blunted arrow which shoots at fancies, fears, suspicions, grudges, and jealousies; the other had a bow decorated with palm, his arrow was gilded at the tip, sharp, gliding, with which he conceals in our soul and pours in our blood a pleasant flame which makes us itch and desire that our race may last entire. Youth was portrayed there with long hair, strong, powerful, magnanimous, the refuge of hot desires, Youth who always brings Loves for company. Like a child there hung from her breast deceitful Jest, Guile, Cunning, Laughter, Tears, Wars and Peace, Truces, discords, and incomplete agreements, and Conversation which beguiles our hearts, and even the souls of the wisest men.)

The scene on the *cestos* presents us with Eros and Anteros. Eros, with a bow made out of yew, a tree traditionally associated with death, and with a blunt arrow, represents unrequited love, which in Neo-Platonic terms leads to the death of the lover. Anteros, whose bow is decorated with triumphant palm leaves and whose sharp



arrow is tipped with gold, stands for mutual love. The subject is frequently encountered in Renaissance paintings and engravings, although the precise interpretation of the two gods differs. In addition to them, we see Jeunesse, "la retraite / Des chaux desirs," accompanied by other allegorical figures. Ronsard has in mind for the whole of this ecphrasis the Homeric description of Aphrodite's *cestos* to which he had alluded elsewhere:<sup>43</sup>

Therewith from her breast she [i.e., Aphrodite] loosed the  
broidered girdle, fair-wrought, wherein are all her enchant-  
ments; therein are love [*φιλότης*], and desire [*ἔμερος*], and  
loving converse [*ῥαριστύς*], that steals the wits even of the  
wise. (*Iliad* 14. 214–17)

There is even a textual allusion to this passage in lines 645–46 of the Ronsard text.

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We may draw a number of conclusions from this analysis of Ronsard's use of ecphrasis, both concerning the manner of presentation of the pictures, and the function they serve in the context of the poems in which they appear.

In the first place, concerning the extent to which the descriptions can be said to represent possible compositions in the visual arts, there is no doubt that Ronsard often extends the boundaries of his descriptions to take in a spectator's decipherment of the images presented. For example, many of his ecphrases are endowed with movement. This is not a problem, in iconographical terms, when a series of events making up a story is described, since, as we have seen, Renaissance pictures frequently contain chronologically separated events within the confines of a single frame, or, as in the case of the Fontainebleau frescoes, portray such events in adjoining cartouches. However, in cases where Ronsard describes rather smaller actions taking place, we are dealing not so much with an accurate description as with an imaginative viewer's interpretation. This is the case, for example, with the scenes portrayed on Thyrsis' cup, especially lines

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<sup>43</sup> In *Des Peintures contenues dedans un tableau*, L. I. 259–64, ll. 49–60.



44–45, “Quelque fois de sur l’un, quelque fois sur les deux, / Mignarde son regard & se prend à sourire,” and the whole of the fisherman scene (lines 47–56); and this is also true for some of the scenes depicted in *La Lyre*. Similarly, as we have seen, emotions are often attributed to figures appearing in the descriptions which would not be apparent in facial expressions.

At other times, Ronsard includes details which would be impossible to portray visually, unless the picture were based upon some well-known classical text which would offer a kind of intertextual commentary. For example, how could an artist show that one of the Cupids has a bow of yew-wood in the *Franciade* description of Venus’ *cestos*? And could all of Ronsard’s allegorical personifications be distinctively represented in this scene? It is clear that in these instances, the details are included because of their symbolic value. The reader, carried along by the poet’s descriptive powers, seldom stops to wonder whether what is being described is truly possible in visual terms.

Nevertheless, we have seen that Ronsard was at times inspired both by specific pictures and by more generalized motifs. He often identifies mythological figures by describing them in purely visual terms, giving them the attributes commonly ascribed to them in Renaissance pictures.

In whatever way the ecphrases are presented, their function within the context of the poems where they appear is always intimately, if not obviously, bound up with the central message of the poems. In the case of ecphrases in the didactic tradition, the function is normally quite apparent, as we have seen. In the simplest form, it can make a statement, and perhaps deliver a warning, about the subject being described, simply by presenting a list of attributes. In other cases, the description may convey an idea which is more thoroughly integrated into the poem, forming only part of the message. The function is always clearly didactic.

With ecphrases in the Neo-Platonic tradition, the message is seldom obvious, and the function of the description is much more variable. Nevertheless, the principal purpose, spelled out by Ronsard in the preface to the *Franciade*, is structural. If in a narrative poem you start *in medias res* rather than relating your story *ab ovo*, then an ecphrasis can have a retrospective function, filling in past events, or it can serve a prophetic purpose, hinting at the final outcome of a

story. In the latter case in particular, as Ronsard warns, the message may be veiled. Elsewhere, the ecphrasis has a paradigmatic function, to parallel the events which the poet is narrating or the ideas which he is conveying. Finally, in poetry of a speculative nature, ecphrasis can be used in a mystical manner, to present, often in mythical form, metaphysical, religious, or cosmic truths. Once again, such subjects are not uncommon in the visual arts in sixteenth-century France. In all these cases, a full understanding of any allegorical meaning is necessary if the poem is to have any kind of structural unity. The case of the Fontainebleau frescoes offers a direct parallel here.

Because of the imprecise nature of the scenes described, the ambiguity of the Neo-Platonic ecphrasis is virtually inevitable. As a result, beyond its structural function, it is normally impossible to restrict allegorical interpretation to a single meaning. The essence of the device, in its Neo-Platonic form, is to be suggestive rather than unequivocal, and it is clear that in this respect Ronsard has certainly succeeded.

We have considered so far examples of descriptions which purport to present actual works of art. However, Ronsard's poetry abounds in similarly detailed descriptions of scenes which do not claim to be artificial, but in which the poet uses similar methods of representation.

## Hypotyposis in the Didactic Tradition

In the section on the Aristotelian ecphrasis, we examined a number of examples and saw that their symbolism was generally quite clear and meant to serve an essentially didactic purpose. Perhaps more common than the didactic ecphrasis in Ronsard's work is the didactic hypotyposis, where we are presented with a detailed allegorical description, not of a work of art, but of a figure or scene envisaged in clearly pictorial terms. Such descriptions are particularly frequent in the *Hymnes* of 1555 and 1556.<sup>44</sup>

For example, the *Hymne de la Mort* (L. VIII. 161-79) contains a short description of Death:

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<sup>44</sup> Albert Py notices these pictorial qualities in the *Hymnes* in his edition for TLF (Geneva: Droz, 1978), 29.

Aussi grands que la terre il [i.e., Jupiter] luy fit les deux bras,  
 Armez d'une grand' faux, & les piedz par à-bas  
 Luy calfeutra de laine, à fin qu'ame vivante  
 Ne peut oïir le bruit de sa trace suyvante, 272  
 Il ne luy fit point d'yeux, d'oreilles, ny de cœur,  
 Pour n'estre pitoyable en voyant la langueur  
 Des hommes, & pour estre à leur triste priere  
 Tousjours sourde, arrogante, inexorable & fiere. 276  
 Pource elle est toute seule entre les Immortelz,  
 Qui ne veut point avoir de temple ny d'autelz,  
 Et qui ne se fleschît d'oraison, ny d'offrande.

(He made her two arms as large as the earth, wielding a great scythe, and he covered the soles of her feet with wool, so that not a living soul could hear the sound of her footsteps right behind; he did not give her eyes, ears, or heart, in order to stop her feeling pity at the sight of men's pining, and so that she should always be deaf, haughty, inexorable, and cruel to their sad prayers. As a result, she is all alone amongst the immortals in not wanting to have a temple or altars, and in being intransigent to prayer and offerings.)

Ronsard, then, gives Death her usual attribute of the scythe, along with all-encompassing arms and padded feet. Death's implacability, represented by her absence of eyes (usually shown in the visual arts by the use of a blindfold), ears, or heart would be taken up by Natalis Comes (book 3, chapter 13, *Mythologiae*, fol. 73<sup>v</sup>):

She alone was considered the harshest of all the gods and the most implacable. Since she could not be bent by anybody's prayers, she received no sacrifices, temples, priests, or holy rites. Orpheus indicated her harshness and implacable will as follows in his *Hymns*: "For to prayers and entreaties, you alone are deaf."

So, there seems to be a mixture of literary and iconographic models for Ronsard's clearly didactic picture of Death.

This appears also to be true for his negative description of Fortune at the end of the *Prière à la Fortune* (L. VIII. 103–14. 292–300). The poet prays to Fortune to protect various members of the French hierarchy:



Et si tu fais cela dont je te pryé,  
 Tu n'auras plus de boule sous tes piedz  
 Comme devant, ny les deux yeux liez,  
 La voile en main, ny au front la criniere,  
 Ny ton roüet, ny des ælles derriere,  
 Ny tout cela dont furent inventeurs  
 En te peignant les vieux peintres menteurs,  
 Pour demonstrier que tu n'es plus volage  
 Comme tu fuz. . . .

(And if you do what I ask you, you will no longer have a ball beneath your feet as before, nor both your eyes blindfolded, with a sail in your hand, nor the lock of hair over your brow, nor your wheel, nor wings behind, nor all the attributes made up by ancient deceitful artists when they painted you, in order to show that you are no longer fickle as you were. . . .)

Although Yves Giraud plays down the role of the visual arts in this evocation of Fortune, Ronsard can hardly have failed to be influenced by the many pictures of Fortune, or the related Occasio, in circulation (e.g., fig. 9), even if he has come up with a composite representation.<sup>45</sup> The poet has accumulated a number of attributes, at times denoting the same thing: speed and inconstancy symbolized by the sail, wings, and the forelock; instability, denoted by the sphere and the wheel; blindness, indicated by the blindfold. But given the traditional nature of these attributes, it seems unnecessary to seek out a particular text or picture as the model.

Another commonplace personification is that of Volupté in *La Vertu amoureuse* (L. X. 337-48):

Au bas de ce rocher, au milieu d'une préé,  
 Demeure une deesse en drap d'or accoustrée:  
 Ses bras sont chargez d'or, & son col d'un carcan,  
 Labeur ingenieux des feuvres de Vulcan.  
 Son front est attrayant, sa peau tendre & douillette,  
 Son œil traître & lascif, sa face vermeillette,  
 Et ses cheveux ondez, annez, & tressez,

84

<sup>45</sup> See Yves Giraud, "Ronsard et la Fortune," in *La Littérature de la Renaissance: mélanges offerts à Henri Weber* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1984), 136.



Sont de feuilles de myrthe & de rose enlassez, 88  
 Sa main est molle & grasse, & son œil n'abandonne  
 Le sommeil paresseux que midy ne rayonne:  
 Au reste elle est en dance, en festins, & deduit  
 Et rien fors le plaisir, indiscrete, ne suit, 92  
 Empoint & decoupée, & pour estre apparente  
 Elle a desja vendu le meilleur de sa rente.  
 Toujours aux grands chemins en cent mille façons  
 Elle ourdist des filletz, & tend des hameçons 96  
 Apastez de delice. . .

(At the base of this crag, in the middle of a meadow, stands a goddess attired in cloth of gold: her arms are laden with gold, and her neck with a gold collar, the ingenious work of Vulcan's smiths. Her appearance is attractive, her skin soft and tender, her gaze treacherous and wanton, her face ruddy, and her hair, waved, in ringlets, and plaited, is entwined with myrtle leaves and roses; her hand is soft and fleshy, and her eyes never abandon lazy sleep until midday shines forth. Besides, she spends her time dancing, feasting, and sporting, and rashly follows nothing but pleasure, being well-dressed in fashionable clothes, and in order to stand out she has already sold most of her inheritance. She is always weaving nets in countless ways on the main roads and casting hooks baited with pleasure. . .)

The contrast between Virtue and Pleasure is encountered most frequently in the visual arts in works depicting the choice of Hercules, although there are similarities in the equally popular theme of Sacred and Profane Love. The contrast in landscape is often a central aspect of the iconography, with Virtue, of course, placed in a craggy, harsh setting, and Pleasure in flowery meadowland.<sup>46</sup> Ronsard's *Volupté* is alluring through her rich, fashionable clothes and gold adornments, symbols of worldly wealth. The intricate hairstyle is, as we have already seen, a sign of artifice, while myrtle leaves and roses are both

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<sup>46</sup> Virtue's landscape may be suggested by Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 289-92. For a study of the choice of Hercules, see Erwin Panofsky, *Hercules am Scheidewege, und andere antike Bildstoffe in der neueren Kunst* (Leipzig, 1930).

associated with Venus. The nets and hooks that she places on the highways are obvious symbols of ensnarement. Once again, although literary sources could be found for the details included by Ronsard, models in the visual arts are just as probable.

Given the relatively obvious nature of this type of imagery, it is not surprising to find Ronsard using similar devices in his satirical poetry, for example, the religious *discours* of the early 1560s. In the *Discours des miseres de ce temps*, we are presented with a description of Opinion:

Elle fut si enflée, & si pleine d'erreur  
 Que mesme à ses parens elle faisoit horreur.  
 Elle avoit le regard d'une orgueilleuse beste.  
 De vent & de fumée estoit pleine sa teste. 140  
 Son cueur estoit couvé de veine affection,  
 Et soubz un pauvre habit cachoit l'ambition.  
 Son visage estoit beau comme d'une Sereine.  
 D'une parole douce avoit la bouche pleine. 144  
 Legere elle portoit des aisles sur le dos:  
 Ses jambes & ses pieds n'estoient de chair ny d'os,  
 Ils estoient faits de laine & de cotton bien tendre  
 Afin qu'à son marcher on ne la peut entendre. 148  
 (L. XI. 26-27. 137-48)

(She was so puffed up, and so full of error that she even horrified her own parents. Her gaze was that of a haughty beast. Her head was full of wind and smoke. Her heart was nourished by empty passion, and she hid ambition beneath a poor-looking cloak. Her face was as beautiful as a Siren's, and her lips were full of sweet words. Swift-moving, she had wings on her back; her arms and legs were not made of flesh and bone, but of very soft wool and cotton so that she could not be heard when she walked.)

This description provides a number of details, both visual and non-visual. While some could be portrayed pictorially (the Siren beauty of the face, the wings, the wool and cotton legs), there are contradictions in the picture (the bestial stare, despite the beauty of the face), as well as characteristics which could not be seen (e.g., lines 137-38, 140-41, 144). What the description lacks in visual detail is compensat-

ed for by the explicit use of metaphor and simile. However, a similar description of Opinion in the *Remonstrance au peuple de France* remains more strictly pictorial:

Elle a les pieds de vent, & de sur les aisselles  
 Comme un monstre emplumé elle porte des aesles, 260  
 Elle a la bouche grande, & cent langues dedans,  
 Sa poitrine est de plomb, ses yeux prompts & ardans,  
 Tout son chef est de verre & a pour compagne  
 La jeunesse & l'erreur, l'orgueil & la manye. 264  
 (L. XI. 77-78. 259-64)

(Her feet are made of wind, and at her shoulders, like a feathered monster, she has wings; her mouth is large, with a hundred tongues inside, and her breast is made of lead, her eyes are quick and glowing; the whole of her head is made of glass, and she is accompanied by Youth and Error, Pride and Madness.)

There is an attempt this time to present in visual terms the attributes which had in the earlier poem been conveyed through non-visual imagery, although as a result, the meaning is less clear. For example, the brutal look (*Discours* 139) is more precisely denoted by "yeux prompts et ardans"; the empty head (*Discours* 140) is now transparently empty ("son chef est de verre," line 263); and the persuasive mouth (*Discours* 144) is now equipped with a hundred tongues (line 261). Even the heart, "cuvé de veine affection" (*Discours* 141), is lodged this time in a leaden chest, where lead is the alchemical symbol of sick, unregenerate man.

Ronsard makes rather more extensive use of hypotyposis for satirical purposes in *La Promesse* (L. XIII. 3-14). Here he relates how, just before waking up one morning, he had the vision of a striking and beautiful lady (lines 16-18):

Sa bouche en soubriant de roses estoit paincte:  
 Elle estoit venerable, & quand elle parloit  
 Un parler emmiellé de sa levre couloit.

(As she smiled, her mouth was tinged with roses; she was venerable, and when she spoke, honeyed speech flowed from her lips.)



Like Volupté in *La Vertu amoureuse*, she is surrounded by symbols of ensnarement:

... elle avoit des appasts,  
Des rets, des hameçons, & de la glus pour prendre  
Les credules esprits qui la vouloyent attendre.  
(lines 22-24)

(... she had bait, nets, hooks, and bird-lime to catch the credulous souls who wished to wait for her.)

In addition, she is surrounded by traditional symbols of vanity:

Sa robbe estoit enflée à grans plis ondoyans  
Elle avoit en ses mains des ballons pleins de vents,  
Des sacs pleins de fumée, & des bouteilles pleines  
D'honneurs & de faveurs, & de parolles vaines.  
(lines 29-32)

(Her dress was puffed out in great undulating folds, in her hands she had bladders filled with winds, bags full of smoke, and bottles full of honors and favors and empty words.)

The scene soon turns into a traditional Triumph scene, as the central figure is surrounded by a host of followers:

Autour de ceste Nymphe erroit une grand' bande,  
Qui d'un bruit importun toutes choses demande, 40  
Seigneurs, soldats, marchans, courtisans, mariniers,  
Les uns vont les premiers, les autres les derniers,  
Selon le bon visage, & selon la caresse  
Que leur fait en riant ceste brave Deesse. 44

.....

A son costé pendoit une grande escarcelle,  
Large, profonde, creuse, où ceste Damoiselle 52  
Mettoit cent mille biens, & les cachoit au fond:  
Seulement par dehors, comme les marchans font,  
En estaloit la monstre, à fin qu'on eust envie,  
Voyant l'ombre du bien, de luy sacrer la vie. 56

(Around this nymph there wandered a great troop of people, asking for everything in an unmannerly clamor: lords, sol-



diers, merchants, courtiers, sailors, some in front, others in the rear, according to the kindly countenance and flattery which this good goddess laughingly shows them. . . . At her side there hung a large money bag, capacious, deep, hollow, into which this young lady placed a hundred thousand riches, and concealed them at the bottom; only on the outside, like merchants, she made a display of them so that people would desire, on seeing the shadow of wealth, to devote their lives to her.)

Inside her money bag are various church and government posts "Qu'elle promet à fin qu'on luy face service" (line 64), and all her followers gravitate around the purse "Comme guespes autour de la grappe nouvelle" ("like wasps around a fresh cluster of grapes") (line 72). The lady, who subsequently reveals her identity to be Promesse (line 104), is preceded by another allegorical figure:

En pompe, devant elle, alloit Dame Fortune,  
Qui sourde, aveugle estoit, & sans raison aucune.

(lines 87-88)

(In majesty, before her, went Dame Fortune, who was deaf, blind, and lacking all reason.)

In this portrayal of Promesse and her train, Ronsard seems to have in mind the allegorical works inspired by Petrarch's *Trionfi*, as shown in figure 19. Although the scene that he describes is quite a complex one, the imagery is explicit and the satirical message clear. In this, as in the other examples of didactic hypotyposis examined here, the poet is using pictorial imagery in precisely the same way as he had in the didactic ecphrasis. Each detail has a precise meaning, dependent on traditional codes of symbolism, and in general, there is an avoidance of any obscurity by the recourse to explanatory comments where necessary.

## Hypotyposis in the Neo-Platonic Tradition

In the case of both the didactic ecphrasis and the didactic hypotyposis, the nature of the imagery employed is such that there can be no doubt as to the presence of a symbolic content in the descriptions concerned. In the case of the Neo-Platonic ecphrasis, the fact that the

poet presents us with a work of art, sometimes of divine or mystical origins, alerts us to the probable allegorical nature of the description. However, there are seldom any such indications when it comes to examples of non-didactic hypotyposis. How far, then, do these descriptions have an allegorical content, and how far are they simply included for the purpose of *copia* and variety?

We have already seen that some Renaissance humanists believed hieroglyphs and other symbols to be revelations of God's knowledge to man. More than this, many sixteenth-century writers considered that phenomena of the natural world could also reveal God's intentions to man, and Ronsard, along with his teacher, Dorat, was certainly of their number. In *Le Chat* (L. XV. 39-47), first published with *La Lyre* in 1569 and dedicated to Rémy Belleau, Ronsard affirms his belief in omens.

Ainsi voit-on, prophetes de noz maux,  
Et de noz biens, naistre des animaux,  
Qui le futur par signes nous predisent,  
Et les mortels enseignent & avisent.

.....  
De là sortit l'escolle de l'Augure  
Merquant l'oyseau, qui par son vol figure  
De l'advenir le prompt evenement  
Ravy de Dieu: & Dieu jamais ne ment.

En noz maisons ce bon Dieu nous envoie  
Le Coq, la Poule, & le Canard, & l'Oye,  
Qui vont monstrant d'un signe non obscur,  
Soit se baignant ou chantant, le futur.

Herbes & fleurs & les arbres qui croissent  
En noz jardins, Prophetes aparoisent:  
J'en ay l'exemple, & par moy je le scay. . .

(And so we witness, prophesying our evils and our good fortunes, the births of animals, which through signs foretell our future, and teach and warn mortals. . . From here emerged the school of augury, observing the bird which by its flight prefigures the future's close events, inspired by God, and God never lies. This good God sends us in our homes the rooster, the hen, the duck, and the goose, who show us the future

through an unequivocal sign, either by their bathing or their singing. Herbs and flowers, and the trees which grow in our gardens appear as prophets: I have evidence of this, and know it from personal experience. . . .)

If this is true of the real world, how much more should we look out for the significance of plants, animals, and other natural phenomena in the fictional world of Ronsard's poetry?

We have already seen examples of the way in which descriptive details, whilst producing a rich and varied texture in a poem, can also convey meaning, reinforcing a mood or atmosphere or presaging the outcome of an event. The language of flowers, known to Ophelia even in her madness, may be largely unfamiliar to us now, but it is frequently put to use in Ronsard's poetry. As Claude-Gilbert Dubois remarks:

The central functional role of the flower or the bouquet is evident in Ronsard through a messenger function or an allegorical function.<sup>47</sup>

And this is equally true of precious stones and metals, animals, and, in fact, the whole realm of nature.

Ecphrasis draws attention to itself as a set piece of virtuoso description. It alerts us to the probability of some ulterior purpose. Other descriptions, however, can be far more discreet. Their sensual nature can easily obscure their underlying meaning, acting like the "voile bien subtil," awakening the readers' interest while at the same time keeping them at a distance. As I have shown elsewhere,<sup>48</sup> even in his earliest narrative poems, such as *Le Ravissement de Cephale* (L. II. 133-47) and *La Defloration de Lede* (L. II. 67-79), Ronsard uses a combination of ecphrasis and hypotyposis to present a sensually alluring style of composition, which embodies enigmatic meanings and layers of significance for the aware reader to perceive. It was on this early narrative tradition that he would model some of the most successful of his hymns.

<sup>47</sup> "Motifs sculpturaux et décoratifs dans la poésie amoureuse (Recueil de 1552-3)," in *Ronsard in Cambridge*, 19.

<sup>48</sup> See "Ronsard's Erotic Diptych: *Le Ravissement de Cephale* and *La Defloration de Lede*."

## CHAPTER 4

# *The Early Hymns*

Les Hymnes sont des Grecs invention premiere.

(Ronsard, L. XVIII. 263. 1)

**F**rom our general discussion of iconographical aspects of Ronsard's poetry, it is clear that the prevailing philosophy of Neo-Platonism in humanist and artistic circles provided a strong unifying influence between the visual arts and poetry. It had a profound effect not only on the choice of subject, use of allegory, and interpretation of works of art, but also on their harmonious structure. Art aimed to please, move, and teach in line with the intentions of classical rhetoric, but perhaps more importantly, the harmony of art, albeit an imperfect copy of celestial harmony, could introduce peace and order into the frequently turbulent affairs of men.

Not all art, of course, was capable of achieving this end, and we have noted the distinctions established by Neo-Platonists such as Proclus between the different kinds of poetry (inspired, didactic, and mimetic). In choosing to center this study on Ronsard's *Hymnes*, I was influenced by a number of considerations. Because these compositions are so varied in form and content, they offer a wide range of poetry, all written in the grand style, but spanning the whole of Ronsard's poetic career. By their very nature, they are likely to fall into the category of inspired poetry, and to embody some form of transcendent meaning. Their arrangement and rearrangement in successive editions of Ronsard's work offer evidence of the poet's ideas about *dispositio*. Finally, from the poetic point of view, they provide examples of his most successful poetry in the grand style. Dedicated



usually to the influential and wealthy, they are in Ronsard's mind more abiding monuments than the decorated palaces to which many patrons devote their riches. This rivalry with the plastic arts leads Ronsard to attempt to produce his own poetic equivalents: temples, palaces, paintings and tapestries, gold and silver ware, etc.

In approaching the *Hymnes*, we shall concentrate on those areas which we have discussed earlier. With regard to *inventio*, we shall be concerned in general terms with the Neo-Platonic and mystic elements which were so important in grand poetry in the Renaissance. We shall consider the ways in which certain themes were treated by Ronsard, looking in particular at his exploitation of the pictorial imagery which helps to form his vision of the world. In investigating the structure of individual poems and their place in entire editions of Ronsard's works, we shall have regard to the organizational principles at work, and the ways in which structure, as in a decorated building or gallery, can be an aid to hermeneutics by establishing parallels and clarifying meaning. In the area of style, we shall be particularly interested in the extent to which Ronsard may have been influenced by Mannerism, and how far he diverged from some of its fundamental principles.

Before looking at Ronsard's early hymns, however, it will be useful to consider the literary antecedents on which he modelled his own poems, in order to determine what shaped his own approach to the genre. A number of classical models were at his disposal, of which the most important are the Homeric hymns, the hymns of Callimachus, and the Orphic hymns.<sup>1</sup> In his study and views of

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<sup>1</sup> The first editions of these poems were all printed in Florence in 1488, 1494, and 1500 respectively. The Homeric hymns, generally appearing in editions of the complete works of Homer, were frequently reprinted in the first half of the sixteenth century, and the first Latin translation by Iodocus Velareus Verbrobanus appeared in Antwerp as early as 1528, while a later version is due to the work of Georgius Dartona (Venice, 1537). Most editions after 1542 include a Latin translation. French editions include those of Sebastianus Gryphius, Lyon, 1541 (reprinted 1542) and the Dartona translation, printed in Paris and Lyon in 1538. The Orphic hymns also appeared in several sixteenth-century editions, while the first Latin translation was prepared by Renatus Perdrierius (Bâle, 1555). Apart from a Latin version of the *Hymn to Artemis*, Callimachus does not seem to have been translated until relatively late, although a French edition of the original text appeared in Paris in 1549, at the Vascosan press. The information here is largely derived from the *Inni omerici*, edited by Filippo Càssola (Verona: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla, 1975);

these collections, he would have been largely dependent on the erudition of humanist acquaintances, and particularly, no doubt, of his friend and mentor, Jean Dorat. For if by the middle of the sixteenth century there was no lack of annotated editions of Latin authors, this situation was very far from obtaining in the case of Greek literature. Generally, printers confined themselves to reproducing the text of a Greek writer, sometimes accompanied by the relevant scholia and, as the century progressed, by a Latin translation.<sup>2</sup> It is extremely rare to find introductory notes or a commentary even in the case of such an important poet as Homer, although to make up for this deficiency, editors sometimes included the lives or comments of ancient writers (in the case of Homer, for example, the lives attributed to Plutarch, Herodotus, and Dio Chrysostom, all contained in the 1504 Aldine edition of Homer). However, even this is rare, and the reader is usually presented only with the bare Greek text.

On the whole, humanists were concerned with producing as accurate a text as possible, and Dorat must have devoted much of his teaching to philological questions. This emerges, for example, in the verses sent by Dorat requesting a manuscript of the Homeric hymns:<sup>3</sup>

... fac Homeri  
Hymnorum mihi codicem vetustum  
Paulum commodites, sed ante primam  
Horam, namque hodie poema graecum  
Illud putre situque et ulcerosum  
Mendis aggrediar meo labore;

(Have the ancient manuscript of Homer's *Hymns* sent to me shortly, but before the first hour, for today I shall tackle that Greek poem which is decaying with mould and disfigured with errors.)

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Ruth Bunker, *A Bibliographical Study of the Greek Works and Translations Published in France During the Renaissance: the Decade 1540-1550* (New York, 1939); *Orphei Hymni*, ed. Guilelmus Quandt (Berlin: Weidmann, 1955); and the Loeb edition of Callimachus.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, *Homeri omnia quae quidem extant opera, graece, adiecta versione latina ad uerbum* (Bâle: Brylingerus & Calybaeus, 1551).

<sup>3</sup> Cited in Pierre de Nolhac, *Ronsard et l'humanisme* (Paris, 1921), 77, quoting from BN MS. lat. 8139, fols. 103-4.

However, as is apparent in the manuscript notes of Dorat's lectures on Homer, he was also interested in the allegorical meaning of the hymns.<sup>4</sup>

Praeterea aduertendum est quomodo quis se accingere debeat lectioni poetarum. Nam si fabulas meras legit nullam interpretationem uel moralem uel physicam ex his excerpens neque abstrusum sensum enucleet non minus profecto ineptus quam ille qui apud Aesopum murem cum Leone fabulantem solum legit interpretationem moralem negligit.

(Besides, we should point out how one ought to prepare to read the poets. For if one reads them as mere fables, without deriving any allegorical interpretation, be it moral or physical, or without laying open their hidden meaning, one is certainly no less foolish than someone who in Aesop only reads through the story of the mouse speaking to the lion, and neglects the moral interpretation.)

Ronsard was acquainted with all three of the Greek sources we have mentioned when he came to write his hymns, although he does not appear to have relied exclusively on any particular group in determining his own conception of the genre. Florent Chrestien, in a polemical poem concerning Ronsard, wrote:

D'Aurat t'a expliqué quelques livres d'Homere,  
Quelques hymnes d'Orphee, ou bien de Callimach,  
Et pource incontinent tu fais de l'Antimach,  
Tu enfles ton gosier, pensant estre en la France  
Seul à qui Apollon a vendu sa science.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> MS. A 184, fols. 2-21 in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan. See my article, "Ronsard and Homeric Allegory" in *Ronsard in Cambridge*, and the two articles by Geneviève Demerson, "Qui peuvent être les Lestrygons?", *Vita Latina* 70 (1978), 36-42, and "Dorat, commentateur d'Homère," in *Études seiziémistes offertes à M. le professeur V.-L. Saulnier*, THR 177 (Geneva: Droz, 1980), 223-34, as well as her book *Dorat en son temps: culture classique et présence au monde* (Clermont-Ferrand: Adosa, 1983), 181-86.

<sup>5</sup> Taken from *Seconde Response de F. de la Baronie à Messire Pierre de Ronsard, Prestre-Gentilhomme Vandomois, Evesque futur. Plus le Temple de Ronsard où la Legende de sa vie est brievement descrite* (n.p., 1563), fol. Aiiiii, cited in Isidore Silver, *Ronsard and the Hellenic Renaissance in France*, vol. 1, *Ronsard and the Greek Epic* (St. Louis: Washington University, 1961), 39.



(Dorat explained to you a few books of Homer, a few hymns of Orpheus or Callimachus, and as a result you immediately write bombastic poetry like Antimachus; you puff out your throat, thinking you are alone in France to whom Apollo has sold his knowledge.)

Since the three sources represent very different ways of approaching the genre, it will be useful to consider briefly their differences.

In the collection of the Homeric hymns known to the sixteenth century, the fragmentary first hymn to Dionysus and the important hymn to Demeter were both missing, while the collection ended with the epigram *εἰς ξένους*. The hymns are all devoted to divinities, are written in hexameters, and make use of the Homeric epic dialect, but apart from this, they extend in range from the three-line hymn 13 to Demeter to the 580-line hymn to Hermes (hymn 4). The essential elements consist of an exordium (mentioning the particular qualities of the divinity) and a farewell formula, often encompassing a prayer. The longer hymns also contain a central narrative section of varying length, and it is possible that the shorter hymns which lack this are merely extracts, an opinion held by at least one editor of the hymns, F. Càssola.<sup>6</sup>

The Callimachean hymn is largely modelled on the Homeric, although it does present certain differences. While the poems are generally written in the epic language associated with Homer, two of the six hymns (5 and 6) are in the Doric dialect, and hymn 5 is in elegiac couplets and not hexameters. Moreover, gods are not invariably the dedicatees of the hymns (as is the case in hymn 4 to Delos and hymn 5 on the bath of Pallas). In structure, they broadly follow the Homeric model, although they tend to dispense with the formal and formulaic nature of the latter. While the Homeric hymn generally begins with a formal announcement of the subject of the poem ("I shall recall and not forget Apollo...", "Muse, sing of Hermes," etc.), Callimachus often chooses a more dramatic opening, especially, for example, in the second hymn, to Apollo:

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<sup>6</sup> Càssola, *Inni omerici*, p. xvii: "Gl'inni minori, che vengono considerati proemi allo stesso titolo degli altri, e più spesso si giudicano gli unici veri proemi, sono in generale estratti, e più precisamente esordi e congedi, di opere più estese."



How Apollo's laurel is shaking! how the whole temple is shaking! Be off, be off, all you profane. Already Phoebus has touched with his divine foot the door's threshold.

The tone of Callimachus' hymns also differs considerably from that of his model, being more deliberately witty, and making a great display of recondite details concerning the gods, coupled with a tongue-in-cheek, deliberative treatment of popularly-held beliefs. Thus, in a section which Ronsard would imitate in his *Hinne de Bacus* (L. VI. 177. 7-16), he hesitates in the first hymn between Mount Ida and Arcadia as Zeus's birthplace:

... which of the two, father, was lying? "The Cretans were always liars." The Cretans even erected a tomb for you, lord; you who cannot die, who are eternal. (1. 7-9)

Moreover, Callimachus, in his Hellenistic erudition, piles up epithets and brief allusions to events connected with the divinity's life.

There is none of Callimachus' witty badinage in the third important group of hymns, traditionally attributed to Orpheus. Their time and place of composition have long intrigued scholars, but in his edition, Quandt agrees with Wilamowitz in attributing them to a single poet "not before the end of the second century AD, but before Nonnus [the fifth-century author of the *Dionysiaca*]."<sup>7</sup> As well as being addressed to divinities, these hymns are also dedicated to deified natural phenomena such as the Stars (7), the Sea (22), Death (87), Victory (33), Night (3), Fortune (72), and Nature (10). Generally speaking, they consist of an opening in which the subject is addressed in the first line. This is followed by a list, of varying length, of epithets, adjectival phrases, and relative clauses defining the divinity in all its various manifestations, and the hymn usually ends with a prayer. It is not infrequent for the same, at times apparently non-transferable epithets, to be attributed to different deities, and for a single deity to be given apparently contradictory properties. There is no narrative content in these hymns which, like most of the others we have considered, are written in hexameters in the Homeric dialect.

In his lectures on Homer, Dorat discusses the three collections as

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<sup>7</sup> Quandt, *Orphei hymni*, 44.

well as the *Odes* of Pindar. He is in no doubt that the Homeric hymns were written by Homer:

Inscribuntur autem Homero. nonnulli tamen adhuc dubitant sitne germanum et legitimum opus illius: siquidem in isto opere quaedam uocabula singularia id est semel usurpata reperiuntur quae in alijs operibus minime usurpantur. Sed haec obiectio levis est. sic Poetarum propria sunt quaedam uocabula ut apud Ouid. *camella* in fastis et apud Virgil. in *culice* et *moreto* et epigrammatis quae nusquam alijs in operibus inveniuntur. (fol. 19<sup>r</sup>)

(Now, they are attributed to Homer. Nevertheless, some people are still in doubt as to whether this is a genuine, authentic work of his, since there are to be found in it a number of unique words, that is *hapax legomena*, which are not at all used in his other works. But this is an unimportant objection. Thus, some words are particular to poets, such as *camella* ["bowl"] in Ovid's *Fasti*, and in Virgil's *Culex*, *Moretum*, and *Epigrams*, which are not to be found elsewhere in their works.)

From the literary point of view, he is quite clear in his mind that the Homeric hymns are superior in quality, even to the works of Pindar, which both he and Ronsard admired:

Quemadmodum uero inter tragicos tres palmam obtinere dicuntur Aeschylus augustus et magniloquens atque archaeus id est antiquus tum Euripides popularis forensis familiarior 3.us Sophocles intermedius unde duobus reliquis perfectior est habitus. Nam ut ait Gallus: "In medijs rebus gratia maior inest." Ita Homerus medium stylum tenuit inter Callimachum et Pindarum et proinde utrique praeponitur. (fol. 19<sup>v</sup>)

(But just as amongst the tragic poets three are said to receive the victor's palm: Aeschylus, majestic, sublime, and "archaios" or ancient; then Euripides, popular, persuasive, more familiar; and thirdly Sophocles, between the other two, so that he was considered more perfect; for as Gallus says: "There is greater enjoyment in the golden mean"; in the same way, Homer maintained an intermediate style between Callimachus and Pindar, and consequently he outdoes both of them.)

Thus, these three collections of hymns represent very different types of poem. The Romans handed down little to the Renaissance in the way of hymns, apart from the invocations of Lucretius to Venus and the Earth (1. 1–43); the Catullan hymn to Diana (34); the Horatian *Carmen saeculare* and odes such as 1. 10 to Mercury, 1. 21 to Diana and Apollo, and 1. 35 to Fortune; Virgil's eulogy to Italy (*Georgics* 2. 136–76); and a number of Claudian's compositions. However, it is the neo-Latin poet Marullus who seems to have exercised the most influence, after the Greeks, on Ronsard's concept of the hymn.

Marullus' *Hymni naturales* are much more varied in intention, tone, and meter than any of the previous collections of hymns.<sup>8</sup> Meters range from the hexameter (1. 1 and 5, 3. 1, and 4. 5), through the lyric meters, to the unusual galliambic meter (in 1. 6, the hymn to Bacchus), while the openings vary between direct invocations to the gods (e.g., "Te te, suprema maximi proles Iovis, / Innupta Pallas, invoco," 1. 2) and more meditative or dramatic beginnings, inspired by Callimachus ("Quis novus hic animis furor incidit? unde repente / Mens fremit horrentique sonant praecordia motu?," 3. 1).

Marullus is far more eclectic with regard to his sources than many previous critics have indicated. Ivo Bruns mentions the influence of Lucretius on the style, if not the philosophical content of the hymns, some of which he rightly claims are inspired by Neo-Platonism, and more specifically the works of Proclus.<sup>9</sup> Ciceri also sees Lucretian influences as well as Ovidian elements,<sup>10</sup> while Sainati, acknowledging the importance of Neo-Platonism on the philosophical content of

<sup>8</sup> They may conveniently be consulted in Alessandro Perosa's edition of *Michaelis Marulli carmina* (Zürich: Thesaurus Mundi, 1951).

<sup>9</sup> Ivo Bruns, "Michael Marullus: ein Dichterleben der Renaissance," *Preussische Jahrbücher* 74 (1893): 122ff. For other articles on Marullus' hymns, see Pier Luigi Ciceri, "Michele Marullo e i suoi 'Hymni naturales'," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 64 (1914): 289–357; Dionysios A. Zakythenos, "Μιχαήλ Μάρουλλος Ταρχανιώτης Ἑλλήν ποιητῆς τῶν χρόνων τῆς Ἀναγεννήσεως," *Ἐπετηρὶς Ἑταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν* 5 (1928): 200–42; Benedetto Croce, "Michele Marullo Tarcantiota," in *Poeti e scrittori del pieno e del tardo Rinascimento*, 3 vols. (Bari: Laterza, 1945), 2: 267–380; and my article, "The *Hymni naturales* of Michael Marullus," in *Acta conventus neo-latini Bononiensis: Proceedings of the Fourth International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies*, ed. R. J. Schoeck, Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, vol. 37 (Binghamton: MRTS, 1985), 475–82.

<sup>10</sup> Ciceri, "Michele Marullo," pp. 323 and 329.



the hymns, sees stylistic borrowings ranging from the Homeric hymns and Callimachus to Lucretius, Catullus, and Claudian.<sup>11</sup> These scholars also see the influence of Italian poets like Pontano, Sannazzaro, and thinkers such as Pico della Mirandola in Marullus' hymns, but none of them refers to the collection of the Orphic hymns and its influence on both the style and content of many of Marullus' poems. This is not the place to produce a detailed comparison of the hymns of Orpheus and Marullus, but a few indications of the areas where this influence is most important will be useful in characterizing Marullus' hymns, and hence the general concept of the hymn form which Ronsard ultimately took over.

In the first place, it is predominantly to the Orphic hymns that the Renaissance looked for models for the hymn of nature, the *hymnus naturalis*. The Homeric hymns had sung of deities or deified heroes, as had the hymns of Callimachus for the most part. The Orphic hymns constituted the only important collection handed down to the Renaissance of poems dedicated to natural phenomena: the Heavens, the Stars, the Sun, the Aether, etc., and of Marullus' hymns, only 1. 5, the *Hymnus Aeternitati*, does not have a corresponding hymn in the Orphic collection. Of course, Marullus does not simply reproduce the Orphic hymn in Latin guise: his poems are generally longer and stylistically more varied. However, he does incorporate aspects of the Orphic hymns into his own compositions: the list of epithets and short descriptions attributed to the divinity being celebrated, the direct address at the start of the hymn, the prayer at the end, and the apparent inconsistency of attributing unique characteristics to more than one deity, or mutually exclusive properties to the same deity.

Such were the models available to Ronsard. In addition, he would have had at his disposal the theoretical writings of Menander the Rhetor in the *Περὶ ἐπιδεικτικῶν*. It was a section of this work (*On Hymns to the Gods*) which provided J. C. Scaliger with the material for his section on hymns in the *Poetices libri septem* of 1561.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> A. Sainati, "Michele Marullo," in *Studi di letteratura latina medievale e umanistica raccolti in occasione del suo ottantacinquesimo compleanno* (Padua: Antenore, 1972), 150.

<sup>12</sup> Scaliger's remarks on the hymn are to be found in *Poetices libri septem* (Lyon: Antonius Vincentius, 1561), 1. 45 (p. 49), and 3. 92-95 (pp. 162-63). There is a



Menander divides hymns into nine categories: invocatory hymns; valedictory hymns; hymns of nature; mythical hymns; genealogical hymns; fictitious hymns; votive hymns; deprecatory hymns; and, inevitably, mixed hymns, combining different aspects of the other categories. Menander had many more examples of hymns from a variety of authors than have survived to this day, including Sappho, Anacreon, Bacchylides, Parmenides, Empedocles, Simonides, but he does mention Orpheus as being one of the principal exponents of the hymns of nature or scientific hymn:

Scientific hymns are such as were composed by Parmenides and Empedocles, expounding the nature of Apollo or of Zeus. Most of the hymns of Orpheus are of this kind. (1. 333)

Menander's editors, Russell and Wilson, doubt, however, that he is referring to the extant collection of Orphic hymns.

Menander devotes separate chapters to all these categories, providing a definition for each kind, discussing specific examples from verse and prose authors, and giving advice concerning their appropriateness for particular subjects and audiences, their length, and the poetic diction suitable for them. The categories most relevant to Ronsard's hymns are probably the natural hymns and the mythological hymns, though Ronsard does have examples of invocatory and fictitious hymns. Of the first kind, Menander says that it is most suitable for vivid, grandiose subjects ("The first point to be made is that this form does not suit the simpler writers, but does suit very well those with vigor and grandeur of conception," 1. 336), in which deities are considered as forces of nature:

Such hymns are found, for example, when, in delivering a hymn to Apollo, we identify him with the sun, and discuss the nature of the sun, or when we identify Hera with air or Zeus with heat. (1. 337)

He writes in the same section that these hymns need not be explicitly about natural phenomena: "Some are written enigmatically, others in an overt manner." However, hymns of the first type, not being

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modern edition of Menander by D. A. Russell and N. G. Wilson: *Menander Rhetor: Edited with Translation and Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981). English quotations in this chapter are taken from this edition.

didactic, would generally be shorter than those of the second type. Menander also includes here a warning against the vulgarization of these hymns: "Such hymns should be carefully preserved and not published to the multitude or the people, because they look too unconvincing and ridiculous to the masses."

After discussing possible similarities between the mythical and genealogical hymns, Menander considers the former category more closely. These poems tend to be of greater length and complexity than some of the other kinds of hymn: "They are appropriate in a higher degree to the poet, since in his case the licence to speak at leisure and wrap up the subject in poetical ornament and elaboration produces no satiety or disgust" (1. 338). Menander particularly stresses the need for the skilful arrangement of the details of the myth, which should be spread out and not expounded straight away:

Antidotes need to be applied, for the sake of brevity and charm; e.g., not introducing every detail in a direct form, but omitting some points, conceding some, introducing some by combination, sometimes claiming to give explanations, or not committing oneself to belief or disbelief. (1. 339)

Ronsard's concept of the hymn would have been influenced by the various sources and related theoretical writings discussed above, whether through the teachings of Dorat or as a result of his own reading. As is the case with so many literary notions in the Renaissance, this concept would almost certainly have been a somewhat complex one, an uneasy synthesis of the highly disparate elements which had survived from the ancient world. As Michel Dassonville remarks on the subject of Ronsard's early attempts at the genre:

Attracted by numerous models, captivated by sources of inspiration which were Christian and pagan in turn, his mind clouded perhaps by the ode, which was still the only ancient genre which he had cultivated, influenced by, above all else, Pindar's sumptuous lyricism, Ronsard experienced some difficulty, it seems, in distinguishing the hymn from the ode.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Michel Dassonville, "Éléments pour une définition de l'hymne ronsardien," *BHR* 24 (1962): 64. This article has subsequently been printed in *Autour des "Hymnes" de Ronsard*, ed. Madeleine Lazard (Geneva: Slatkine, 1984), 1-32.

In the light of Dorat's discussion of the relative merits of Homer, Callimachus, and Pindar, this is not surprising. Dassonville rejects the attempts of Laumonier, Gustave Cohen, Chamard, and Schmidt to define and categorize the Ronsardian hymn, and prefers himself to provide a structural definition: the hymn is a tripartite poem consisting of a proem "souvent suivi d'un retour lyrique sur soi"; a central development; and a final wish, greeting, praise, or prayer for the poet or the dedicatee of the poem.<sup>14</sup> However, as it stands, this definition does not really differentiate between the Ronsardian hymn and the examples of the hymn form to be found amongst the ancients, and in particular the longer Homeric hymns. This can be done perhaps more effectively by considering the function of Ronsard's hymns, but in order to do this, it will be necessary to determine the poet's attitude towards the subjects with which he deals and the significance he attaches to the mythological content. It will also be useful to consider Ronsard's attitudes towards his models, in particular the three Greek collections of hymns, and Marullus.

It would, however, be dangerous to try to impose an uneasy unity on all those poems which Ronsard designates as *hymnes*, and still more so to criticize him for a lack of unity in them. As Francis Cairns remarks:

"Hymn" therefore is not a genre in the sense in which *proemiptikon* or *komos* is a genre. Nor is it a genre in the other common sense of the word, in which it is used to refer to kinds of literature like epic, elegy, or lyric; for these kinds of literature are each characterized by meter and length, and more important they are mutually exclusive. "Hymn" is not characterized by meter or by length, and hymns can be found in epic, elegy, lyric, etc.<sup>15</sup>

In fact, there is a gradual development in Ronsard's approach to the hymn, and his early examples tend to be based quite closely on one or more identifiable sources.

In dealing with Ronsard's hymns, we shall be looking at them not

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<sup>14</sup> "Éléments pour une définition," pp. 61-63 and 71.

<sup>15</sup> Francis Cairns, *Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1972), 92.



in isolation but in the context of their place in the various editions of the poet's works. We shall particularly concentrate on those poems which form part of the books of hymns. However, to start with, we shall consider briefly the five compositions which pre-date the first book of hymns, published in 1555.

Ronsard's interest in the hymn appears to begin in the autumn of 1549, when he published *L'Hymne de France* (L. I. 24-25), a poem which would remain in the collected books of hymns until the edition of 1572-73. The short *Hinne à Saint Gervaise, et Protaise* (L. II. 5-7), first published in the *Quatre premiers livres des Odes* of 1550, did not enjoy the same success, but the *Hinne à la nuit*, which first appeared in the same collection, disappeared from the 1560 collection of hymns, only to be included in the fourth book of hymns in the editions of 1567, 1571, and 1572-73. The *Hymne triumphal sur le trépas de Marguerite de Valois, Roïne de Navarre* of 1551 (L. III. 54-78) was destined to take its place in the fifth book of *Odes*, but the *Hinne de Bacus* of 1555 appears in all the collective editions from 1560.

The fate of these early examples of the hymn underlines as much as anything else Ronsard's uncertainty about the nature of the genre at this time, particularly with regard to its form. Three of them were clearly considered by their author to be odes, while the *Hymne de France* and the *Hinne de Bacus*, written in decasyllables and alexandrines respectively, would provide the model for all subsequent examples of the genre. Before considering the 1555 collection of *Les Hymnes*, it will be useful to consider the three early hymns which survived in later collections.

*L'Hymne de France* is in fact more of a panegyric than a hymn, being modelled, as Laumonier indicates, on Virgil's eulogy of Italy in *Georgics* 2. 136-76, though it incorporates a number of other sources as well. In the opening lines (1-16), the poet makes an address to his lyre, which is imbued with Orphic powers. For example, he writes:

Tu peuz tirer les forez de leur place,  
Fleschir l'enfer, mouvoir les monts de Thrace,  
Voire apaiser le feu, qu'il ne saccaige  
Les verds cheveux d'un violé boucaige. . . . (lines 9-12)

(You can draw forests from their spot, move the Underworld, displace the mountains of Thrace, and even calm fire so that it does not destroy the green tresses of a profaned grove. . . .)



Line 17 then introduces the main theme, the praise of France, in comparison with other parts of the world. Ronsard ends the poem with a short valediction (lines 215–24), recommending to France his lyre, and thus providing a circular pattern to the hymn.

If the *Hymne de France* is something of a *contaminatio* of classical sources, the *Hinne à la nuit*, first published in the *Troisième Livre des Odes* of 1550, is, as Laumonier says, “d’un bout à l’autre la paraphrase d’une ode saphique du napolitain Pontano” (L. II. 21, n. 1). In many ways, it is curious that this poem was placed in the 1567 collection of hymns, having been treated more appropriately as an ode in 1560. It is certainly addressed to the Night, and contains a prayer at the end:

Mai, si te plaist déesse une fin à ma peine,  
Et donte sous mes braz celle qui est tant pleine  
De menasses cruelles. . . . (L. II. 22. 25–27)

(Please, goddess, put an end to my pain, and tame beneath my arms the lady who is so full of cruel threats. . . .)

Yet the tone of the poem is sensual, and reminiscent of Latin and neo-Latin amatory verse, as well as certain aspects of the Pléiade’s own “style mignard,” as is evident from the following lines:

Lors que l’amie main court par la cuisse, & ores  
Par les tetins, ausquels ne s’acompare encores  
Nul ivoire qu’on voie,  
Et la langue en errant sur la joüe, & la face,  
Plus d’odeurs, & de fleurs, là naissantes, amasse  
Que l’Orient n’envoie. (lines 13–18)

(When the lover’s hand runs over the thigh, and now over the breasts, which remain unparalleled by any ivory one can see, and the tongue, in wandering over the cheek and the face, collects more fragrances and flowers, budding there, than the Orient sends forth.)

When it comes to the *Hinne de Bacus* of 1554, however, Ronsard seems to have a far clearer idea of what for him constitutes a hymn, and, not surprisingly, this poem appears in all the later collective editions of the hymns. By this time, it is clear from textual evidence that Ronsard has read and assimilated the full range of classical models: the Homeric hymns, Callimachus’ hymns, the Orphic

hymns, and Marullus' *Hymni naturales*. The *Hinne de Bacus* bears the marks of all of these collections: the wit of Callimachus, as evidenced in lines 7–16 on the birthplace of Bacchus, inspired by Callimachus 1. 7–9 on Zeus's birthplace, cited above; the lists of epithets and attributes which are typical of the Orphic hymns and of Marullus (see, for example, lines 165ff. and 231ff.); and the valediction which is normal in the Homeric hymns. For the first time, as we shall see, Ronsard brings together the elements that would contribute to the success of the later hymns.

Terence Cave has already considered this early hymn in some detail, and pointed to the popularity of the theme in the visual arts of the Renaissance, amongst which Titian's painting (fig. 20) is one of the finest examples.<sup>16</sup> Concentrating on the triumphal procession described in lines 109–32, he shows how the god's ambiguous nature is suggested visually by the juxtaposition of opposing forces—the regal qualities of the god suggested by the “manteau Tyrian” (line 113) contrasted with the violence of the lynxes who draw his chariot, for example. Other qualities are suggested by the composition of the crown he wears:

Un chapelet de liz mellés de roses franches,  
Et de feuille de vigne, et de lhierre espars,  
Voltigeant, umbrageoit ton chef de toutes pars.

(L. VI. 182. 114–16)

(A wreath of lilies mixed with red roses, scattered with vine leaves and ivy, tumbling about, shaded your head on all sides.)

Here, the various plants and flowers are traditional symbols of love (roses), immortality (the evergreen ivy and the lily), and fecundity (the vine). Bacchus and his train, then, represent a *discordia concors*, not only on a human but also on a cosmic level, as becomes clear in the final section of the poem where Bacchus is seen leading the cosmic dance (lines 274–76).

On the other hand, Cave does not discuss the first part of the poem in which Ronsard deals with the circumstances surrounding Bacchus' birth and nurture. A unique aspect of this concerns Juno's

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<sup>16</sup> See “The Triumph of Bacchus and its Interpretation in the French Renaissance: Ronsard's ‘Hinne de Bacus.’”

wish, in the course of her attempts to kill the young god, to feed him to her bitch:

Junon n'attendit point, tant elle fut irée,  
 Que sa charette à Paons par le ciel fust tirée,  
 Ains faisant le plongeon se laisse toute aller  
 A l'abandon du vent, qui la guidoit par l'ær 60  
 Toujours fondant en bas sur la terre Indienne:  
 Beante à ses talons la suivoit une chienne,  
 Qu'expres elle amenoit, à fin de se venger  
 Et faire ce bastard à sa chienne manger. 64  
 Mais Inon qui previt par augures l'ambuche,  
 Pour tromper la deesse, Athamante elle huche,  
 Et lui conta comment Junon venoit charcher  
 L'anfançon pour le faire en pieces detrancher: 68  
 Athamante soudain le tapit contre terre,  
 Et couvrit le berceau de feuilles de lhierre,  
 De creinte que Junon en charchant ne le vist,  
 Et qu'englotir tout vif à son chien ne le fist 72  
 Ou de peur qu'autrement ne lui fist quelque offence.  
 (L. VI. 179-80. 57-73)

(Juno was so enraged that she did not wait for her peacock chariot to be drawn through the sky, but, plunging down, she surrendered entirely to the wind, which guided her through the air as she sank down onto the land of India. Hard on her heels she was followed by a gaping she-dog which she brought on purpose to avenge herself and feed this bastard-child to her dog. But Ino, who through augury foresaw the ambush, in order to trick the goddess, called out to Athamas, and told him how Juno was coming to seek out the baby to have him hacked to pieces. Athamas at once conceals him on the ground and covers the cradle with ivy leaves, lest Juno see him in her search and have him swallowed alive by her dog, or harm him in some other way.)

Other elements in Ronsard's account of the birth of Bacchus are more traditional. Jupiter causes his mortal beloved, Semele, to become pregnant, whereupon Juno, in the shape of Semele's nurse, Beroë, persuades her rival to ask Jupiter to appear before her in all

his splendor (lines 17–21), as a result of which Semele is killed by her lover's lightning bolts, and Bacchus is born prematurely. Jupiter hides his son in his thigh until it is time for him to be born (lines 27–30) and then transfers Bacchus to Nysa to be nurtured by Hippe (or Hipta), Ino and Athamas (lines 23–24, 31–48), or by nymphs (line 45).

There is some confusion in Ronsard's account, at times increased by later variants. For example, in lines 23–25:

... ton pere marri  
A Nyse t'envoia pour y estre nourri  
Des mains d'Ippe, & d'Inon, d'Athame & Melicharse.

(... your distraught father sent you to Nysa to be nurtured by the hands of Hippe, Ino, Athamas, and Melicharses.)

Dorat's translation sheds both light and darkness on these lines:

... iam tum genitor Nysam te misit alendum  
Hippaeque Inonique Athamantique & Meticharsae [sic].  
(Dorat, *Poematia* [1586], 376)

(... then your father sent you to Nysa to be nurtured by Hippe, Ino, Athamas, and Meticharses.)

"Ippe," then, is the Orphic goddess Hippa or Hipta, and "Athame," despite the 1584–1587 variant "la vieille Athame," is the husband of Ino, Athamas. "Melicharse" is presumably Melicertes, their son (see line 81 of this poem). The form "Melicharse" appears nowhere else in Ronsard's works, and is not found in ancient accounts of the myth, although according to Robert Graves, "Ino's younger son Melicertes is the Canaanite Heracles Melkarth ('protector of the city'), *alias* Moloch..."<sup>17</sup> Dorat's "Meticharsae" is probably a typographical error.

The allegorical significance of the birth, as recounted by Ronsard, almost certainly represents the growth of the vine, an explanation frequent in the Renaissance mythographers. Natalis Comes would write, for example (fol. 155<sup>v</sup>, *Mythologiae*):

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<sup>17</sup> Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, 2 vols. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1955, reprinted 1964), 1: 230.



He is said to have been sewn into Jupiter's thigh, because the vine is extremely greedy for warmth. . . . Nymphs are said to have nurtured him after receiving him from his mother's ashes because the vine is of all trees the dampest, and its fruit, if properly watered, is much healthier and grows at the same time. He is said to have been transferred to Egypt because of the warmth of the region and the fertility of the soil, and the vine needs something similar to this region.

Finally, the details concerning Juno and her bitch must involve a physical interpretation like the other elements surrounding Bacchus' birth. Juno, as the lower air surrounding the earth, is accompanied late in summer by the dog-star which heralds excessive heat. Elsewhere, in *Les Bacchanales, ou le folatrisse voyage d'Hercueil pres Paris* (L. III. 184-217), Ronsard refers to "l'ardente Canicule" (line 148) as "la chienne" (line 155). In order to protect the vine from this heat, an ivy covering is used to shelter it, suggested by Athamas's covering of the cradle with ivy leaves.

Bacchus' growth (lines 83-92) and discovery of wine (lines 93-104) follow on logically from this, as does the spread of the use of wine, suggested by the triumphal procession of lines 105-32. Renaissance mythographers such as Conti emphasize the fact that in moderation, wine is a force for good ("quia cum moderatione sumptus utilis sit & bonus potus," fol. 150<sup>v</sup>), but drunk in excess, it leads to evil:

For in conformity with the very nature of drunkards, lynxes, tigers, leopards, and panthers are said to follow him, and to pull his chariot. For wine marks those who drink immoderately with the characteristics and cruelty of these wild beasts, and renders them insane. (fol. 155<sup>v</sup>)

As Cave indicates, this is suggested by the various forces present in Bacchus' retinue.

The ecstatic side of Bacchus is also, of course, emphasized by Ronsard, particularly since the Bacchic or mystic frenzy could inspire the poet. In the dithyrambic section of the hymn (lines 179ff.), this is applied by the poet to himself in terms reminiscent of poetic frenzy; compare lines 187-88:

Je sen mon coeur trambler, tant il est agité  
Des poignans aiguillons de ta divinité

(I can feel my heart tremble, so excited is it by the piercing goads of your godhead)

with lines 67–72 of the poem *A Monsieur de Belot*, cited in chapter 2.

The final main section of the poem sees Bacchus at work on a cosmic scale. As well as providing mankind with music, law, religion, etc., he also causes the rebirth of the world at springtime:

Tu fais germer la terre, & d'estranges couleurs  
 Tu revests les vers prés orguillis de leurs fleurs,  
 Tu dedaignes l'enfer, tu restaures le monde  
 De ta longue jeunesse, & la machine ronde  
 Tu poises justement, & moderes le bal  
 (T'oy balant le premier) de ce grand animal.

(lines 271–76)

(You cause the earth to sprout and you cloak with unwonted colors the green meadows, grown proud with their flowers; you disdain the Underworld, you restore the world with your long-lived youthfulness, and you balance exactly the round universe and control the dance of this great creature, with you being the first to dance.)

Although Bacchus is more normally associated with autumn, it is the Orphic god that Ronsard, following Marullus, has in mind here, as we can see from the *Hymnus Baccho* 50–54:

Tibi ager viret almus, tu florea prata tepentibus  
 Zephyris coloras, tu dissona semina ligas,  
 In saecula mundo semper fugientia reparas  
 Longa iuventa, tu libras pondera machinae  
 Medioque terram suspendis in aere stabilem. . .

(For *you* the bountiful field grows green, *you* give color to the flowery meadows through the warm west winds, *you* bind together different breeds, you restore the ever-fleeting generations in the universe with long-lasting youth, *you* balance the cosmic forces and hold the earth, unmoving, in mid air. . .)

Marullus gives Bacchus, in other words, attributes similar to those of the Orphic god Amor who, as the creative principle in the universe, was variously referred to by the Orphics as Phanes, Protogonos,

Dionysus, Eros, Metis, and Erikepaios; it is this form that Ronsard also appears to have in mind.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, there is a progress in the hymn from Bacchus as the earthly vine, through Bacchus as the god of wine and of mystic frenzy in the sublunar world, to Bacchus as the moving principle in the translunar world.

Although there is a certain coherence in this hymn, it is nevertheless slightly marred by confusing and confused ideas. In the first place, Ronsard has not worked out in his own mind the exact nature of his Bacchus. True, he wishes to emphasize the positive aspects of the god, as Cave points out, and to that end suppresses details concerning the ritual slaughter of animals (lines 93–104), the death of the god at the hands of the Giants (lines 151–64), and Bacchus' androgynous appearance (lines 85–92). Later on, however, he would restore some of these details in *A Monsieur de Belot* (already discussed in chapter 3) and in the *Hymne de l'Autonne* (see below, chapter 7), where the bisexual nature of Bacchus is an important element in the explanation of the various changes the earth undergoes throughout the year. Moreover, the confusion over the nymphs who raise Bacchus, and where they live (India or Arabia), along with an excessive reliance at times on Marullus lead to a less than clear idea of what Ronsard has in mind. This is typified by lines 282–83:

Je te salüe à droit le Lychnite admirable  
Des homes & des Dieus . . .

(I salute you in a fitting way, wondrous Lychnites of men and gods . . .)

which is Ronsard's version of: "Salve, benigne lychnita, deum et pater hominum" (Marullus, *Hymni Naturales* 1. 6. 58). Later, Marullus corrected "lychnita" to "licnita," but Ronsard, as Laumonier notes, has taken the word *lychnita* (in Greek *λυχνίτης*) in the sense of "lamp" and as such follows it with the two dependent objective genitives "des homes & des Dieus," whereas Marullus uses the word as an epithet of Bacchus ("bearing the sacred *λίκνον*," or fan-shaped basket, carried on the head at the feast of Bacchus and containing mystical objects).

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. my paper on Marullus' *Hymni naturales*, 478.



Despite these reservations, the hymn represents a turning point, for in it, Ronsard has developed the poetic voice which would form the basis of his style in the important 1555 collection of hymns. As Cave remarks:

... the movement away from allegory in the strict [i.e., medieval] sense and towards metaphor has been brought about in part at least by this exploitation on a visual, decorative and rhythmic level of images which had earlier been treated schematically. ... Ronsard clearly perceived the enduring value of myth as a means of embodying profound insights into man and the universe.

He is using here the principle of the "voile bien subtil" to conceal the various layers of meaning in the poem, as he would do in subsequent mythological hymns. On the stylistic level, the fertility associated with Bacchus is paralleled by a mannerist lexical profusion, notably in the epithets attributed to the god (e.g., lines 231-36), which add little to the meaning of the text but which contribute to the mystic, incantatory tone of the poem. The inspirational Dionysus had set him on the right path.

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The later hymns would witness a refinement of the qualities which are apparent in the first of Ronsard's important mythological hymns. With the 1555 collection, he appears to develop a more unified vision, which is further modified in 1556 with the two largely narrative poems, *L'Hymne de Calais, et de Zetes* and *L'Hymne de Pollux et de Castor*. With these changes comes an increasing appeal to the visual. As Albert Py remarks in his introduction to the *Hymnes*:<sup>19</sup>

We shall allow ourselves to base on such indications the impression that, in Ronsard, the characterization of the subject of the hymn, through the aesthetic openings to which it invites us, tends to cause the language of the hymns to slip from the aural to the visual level. The voice sparks off images

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<sup>19</sup> Published in Geneva, 1978, TLF 251. See p. 29.



which present themselves to the sight more boldly than the voice makes itself heard. The song is matched with increasing insistence by a picture.

In our study of the hymns, we shall be considering these changes by dealing with the hymns chronologically in their main groups: the 1555 *Hymnes*; *Le Second Livre des Hymnes* (1556), and the hymns dedicated to the Cardinal de Lorraine (1559); the seasonal hymns (1563) along with the scattered contributions to the genre which appeared between 1565 and the posthumous 1587 edition of Ronsard's works. We shall also look at the changing shape of the collective editions before an attempt is made to synthesize the results of this study.

## CHAPTER 5

# *The Hymns of 1555*

... en la forme ronde

Gist la perfection qui toute en soy abonde.

(Ronsard, L. VIII. 142. 33-34)

**T**he appearance of the first collection of hymns in 1555 seems to be marked by a certain controlled optimism on Ronsard's part. He had completed a substantial collection of poems in the grand style, to the glory of his friends and patrons, both actual and potential; he had firmly established in the vernacular a new poetic genre which would in many ways prove more successful than the ode; and there appears to be a sense that Henry II might yet be persuaded to provide the royal patronage necessary for the composition of what was intended to be the culmination of his poetic efforts, the *Franciade*.

Henry was continuing his father's patronage of artists and architects, and rivalry with the visual arts is evident in the hymns. Ronsard is at pains to emphasize the ephemeral nature of the plastic arts compared with that of poetry. He warns the king in the *Hymne du treschrestien roy de France Henry II. de ce nom* (L. VIII. 5-46):

Un Roy, tant soit il grand en terre ou en proüesse,  
Meurt comme un laboureur sans gloire, s'il ne laisse  
Quelque renom de luy, & ce renom ne peut  
Venir apres la mort, si la Muse ne veut  
Le donner à celluy qui doucement l'invite,  
Et d'honneste faveur compense son merite.  
Non, je ne suis tout seul, non, tout seul je ne suis,  
Non, je ne le suis pas, qui par mes œuvres puis

Donner aux grandz Seigneurs une gloire eternelle:  
 Autres le peuvent faire, un Bellay, un Jodelle,  
 Un Baïf, Pelletier, un Belleau, & Tiard,  
 Qui des neuf Sœurs en don ont reçu le bel art  
 De faire par les vers les grandz Seigneurs revivre,  
 Mieux que leurs bastimens, ou leurs fontes de cuivre.  
 (lines 731-44)

(A king, however great he may be in land or prowess, dies without glory like a ploughman, unless he leaves some remembrance of himself, and this remembrance cannot come after death, if the Muse does not wish to give it to one who gently invites her and rewards her merit with worthy support. No, I am not alone, no, I am not all alone, no, I am not, who can by my works grant everlasting glory to mighty lords; others can do this: a Du Bellay, a Jodelle, a Baïf, a Peletier, a Belleau, a Tyard, who have been freely given by the nine Sisters the fine art of bringing back to life through their poetry mighty lords more effectively than their buildings or their bronze sculptures.)

In *Le Temple de Messeigneurs le Connestable, et des Chastillons* (L. VIII. 72-84), he erects his own buildings and statues to serve as a lasting monument to the family which has favored him. However, the note of disillusionment which enters into the *Second Livre des Hymnes* is as yet absent in 1555.

This is perhaps evident as much as anything in the *dispositio* of the hymns. Much thought has been given to this subject in the past, with one of the more recent contributions establishing, in my view, the correct criteria for a structural analysis.<sup>1</sup> Jean Céard sees the hymns revolving around the opposition between the sublunar and the translunar worlds, a theme which Ronsard would constantly return to in later collections:

... in this ample meditation on the human condition represented by the *Hymnes*, Ronsard constantly contrasts heaven

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<sup>1</sup> See Jean Céard, "La Disposition des livres des *Hymnes* de Ronsard." For an earlier consideration of this issue, see Michel Dassonville, "Éléments pour une définition de l'hymne ronsardien."

and earth, God and men, eternity and time, the knowledge of the soul freed from the body and the ignorance of earthly man, the peace of the Golden Age and today's war, immutability and change, the desire for happiness and present-day wretchedness. (p. 85)

This essentially Neo-Platonic approach is closely associated with Christian views and commonplaces in the 1555 collection, as we shall see later on. Céard sees the hymns as being organized in large or small blocks:<sup>2</sup>

To start with, a group of four poems [which] each partake in their own way in the initial expression of an order which is a manifestation of the divine. . . . The next two poems . . . offer a descent into the sea of dissimilarity. . . . Following these two plunges into the Multiple we have making up, in my view, the core of the first book the *Hymnes du Ciel* and *des Astres*, [where] the very nature of God is glimpsed. . . . It is . . . to the meditation of our condition that the next two poems mean to lead us . . . the *Hercule Chrestien* . . . offers us, by means of the contemplation of history, an ascent.

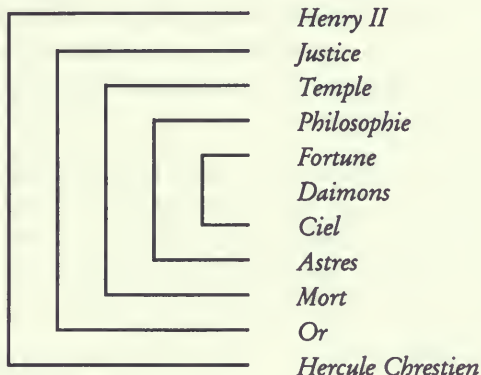
We could represent this schematically as follows:

<i>Henry II</i>	}	manifestation of divine order on earth
<i>Justice</i>		
<i>Temple</i>		
<i>Philosophie</i>		
<i>Fortune</i>	}	disharmony
<i>Daimons</i>		
<i>Ciel</i>	}	harmony of God
<i>Astres</i>		
<i>Mort</i>	}	the human condition
<i>Or</i>		
<i>Hercule Chrestien</i>		ascent

<sup>2</sup> Céard, "La Disposition des livres des *Hymnes*," 87-92.



Although I would agree with Céard's general views, I find this pattern too asymmetrical and unbalanced in a collection of poems about divine order. Rather, it seems to me that, like the frescoes in the Galerie François I<sup>er</sup>, these hymns are organized in a ring pattern around a central pivot, *Les Daimons*.



According to this *dispositio*, the first five hymns are largely concerned with the sublunar world, an essentially passive recipient of influences from the translunar world, presented in the last five hymns. *Les Daimons* is pivotal in that it concentrates on the space between the two worlds where divine and mortal meet.

Muses, quand nous voudrons les loüenges chanter  
Des Dieux, il nous faudra au nom de Jupiter  
Commencer, & finir. . .  
Mais quand il nous plaira chanter l'honneur des Roys,  
Il faudra par HENRY, le grand Roy des François,  
Commencer, & finir. . . (L. VIII. 5-6, 1-3, 5-7)

(Muses, when we want to sing the praises of the gods, we must start and end with the name of Jupiter. . . But when we wish to sing the honor of kings, we must start and end with Henry, the mighty king of France. . .)

writes Ronsard at the beginning of his first hymn.

Doncques, de CHRIST le nom tressainct & digne  
Commencera & finira mon Hymne  
(L. VIII. 208. 11-12)

(So, the most holy and worthy name of Christ will start and end my hymn)

he writes in the last hymn, and the thematic parallels between the two poems are obvious. The long hymn to Henry II is about God's anointed king on earth, while the *Hercule Chrestien* concerns the divine Messiah. There is, moreover, a contrast between the disorder of the world in the first hymn, where the subject of Henry II's wars is very much to the fore, and the beneficent effects of Christ, who is able to restore some order to the world:

Qu'est-ce d'Hercule, & du puissant Atlas,  
Qui ce grand Ciel soutiennent de leurs braz?  
*Si-non le PERE & le FILZ, qui ressemble*  
*De force au PERE, & soutiennent ensemble*  
*Tout ce grand Monde, ouvrage qui seroit*  
*Bien tost tombé, si DIEU ne le tenoit.*

(L. VIII. 219. 225-30)

(What are Hercules and mighty Atlas, who support these great heavens with their arms, if not the Father and the Son, who in strength is like the Father, and support together the whole of this great world, a creation which would soon collapse if God did not maintain it.)

Similarly, the *Hymne de la Justice* deals largely with the decline of the world since the Golden Age and the possibility that it will return to its original state of chaos through divine retribution (cf. L. VIII. 63. 327-30). By contrast, gold is praised in the *Hymne de l'Or* in a superficially cynical and worldly manner. However, in a hymn dedicated to Dorat, we should be looking for a meaning beyond the merely literal one, and gold, of course, traditionally represents incorruptibility, equilibrium, and immortality. *Le Temple de Messeigneurs le Connestable, et des Chastillons* celebrates the Châtillon family and sets out to preserve their memory on earth after their death:

Ainsi, mon Mecenas, dans ce Temple de gloire  
Je mettray ces portraictz, sacrez à la Memoire,  
A fin que des longs ans les cours s'entresuyvants  
Ne foulent point à bas leurs honneurs survivans,  
Et que des CHASTILLONS la maison estimée

Vive, maugré le temps, par longue renommée. . . .

(L. VIII. 82. 197-202)

(Thus, my patron, I shall place in this temple of glory these portraits, dedicated to Mnemosyne, so that the succeeding processions of long years should not trample down their enduring honors and that the famed house of Châtillon should live, in spite of time, through long renown. . . .)

The *Hymne de la Mort*, on the other hand, sings the praises of the afterlife itself in both Neo-Platonic and Christian terms which contrast with the inevitably imperfect poetic immortality of the sublunar world.

Continuing with the sublunar/translunar division, the *Hymne de la Philosophie* deals with the way in which man can have some knowledge of heavenly things while still imprisoned on earth:

Elle [viz., la Philosophie], voyant qu'à l'homme estoit  
nyé

D'aller au Ciel, disposte, a delié  
Loing, hors du corps, nostre Ame emprisonnée,  
Et par esprit aux astres l'a menée,  
Car en dressant de nostre Ame les yeux,  
Haute, s'attache aux merveilles des Cieux,  
Vaguant par tout, & sans estre lassée  
Tout l'Univers discourt en sa pensée,  
Et seulle peut des astres s'alier  
Osant de DIEU la nature espier.

(L. VIII. 86-87. 21-30)

(Seeing that it was denied to man to go to heaven, Philosophy readily freed our imprisoned soul from its body, and led it in spirit to the stars; for by raising up our soul's gaze it clasps, on high, to the wonders of the heavens, roaming everywhere, and without being wearied surveys the entire universe in its thought, and alone can associate with the stars, daring to observe the nature of God.)

The *Hymne des Astres* also concentrates on the idea of man's soul imprisoned in his earthly body, but in this case, it looks even more triumphantly to the possibility of escape:

C'est trop long temps, Mellin, demeuré sur la terre  
 Dans l'humaine prison, qui l'Esprit nous enserre,  
 Le tenant engourdy d'un sommeil ocieux  
 Il faut le delier, & l'envoyer aux cieux:  
 Il me plaist en vivant de voir souz moy les nües,  
 Et presser de mes pas les espaules chenües  
 D'Atlas le porte-ciel, il me plaist de courir  
 Jusques au Firmament, & les secretz ouvrir  
 (S'il m'est ainsi permis) des Astres admirables. . .

(L. VIII. 150. 1-9)

(Mellin, we have stayed too long on earth in our mortal prison which encloses our spirit, keeping it numbed in idle slumber; we must release it and send it to the heavens. I wish, while still alive, to see the clouds beneath me and to tread my feet on the hoary shoulders of Atlas, the sky-bearer; I wish to run as far as the firmament and reveal, if I am allowed to, the secrets of the wondrous stars. . .)

Later on in the hymn, we learn of the influence of the stars on the mortal world, again emphasizing the active nature of the translunar world compared with the passivity of the earth.

The final pairing involves the *Priere à la Fortune* and the *Hymne du Ciel*. Again, the first of these poems is very much concerned with the instability and strife of the sublunar world:

Puisque noz Roys espointz de trop de gloire,  
 N'ont autre soing que par une victoire  
 De quelque ville, ou d'un chasteau conquis  
 Hausser leur bruit par sang d'hommes aquis,  
 Et puis qu'ilz ont de toute leur contrée  
 Pour cherir Mars, chassé la belle Astrée,  
 Et pour la Paix ont choysi le Discord,  
 Et pour la vie ilz ont choisi la mort  
 Dedans leurs cœurs, . . .  
 Ains vivre ensemble en paix & en concorde,  
 Loing de la guerre, & de toute discorde. . .

(L. VIII. 107. 99-107, 111-12)

(Since our kings, spurred on by too much glory, care for nothing but to enhance their reputations at the expense of



human blood, by vanquishing some town or conquering a castle, and since they have chased the beautiful Astraea from the whole of their land, to cherish Mars, and have chosen in their hearts Discord over Peace, death over life, . . . rather than live together in peace and harmony, far from war and all discord...)

The second poem concentrates on the harmony and perfection of the celestial world, and the beneficent effects of the heavens, in contrast to the more dire effects of Fortune:

L'Esprit de l'ÉTERNEL qui avance ta course,  
 Espandu dedans toy, comme une grande source  
 De tous costez t'anime, & donne mouvement,  
 Te faisant tournoyer en sphere rondement,  
 Pour estre plus parfaict, car en la forme ronde  
 Gist la perfection qui toute en soy abonde:  
 De ton bransle premier, des autres tout divers,  
 Tu tires au rebours les corps de l'Univers,  
 Bien qu'ilz resistant fort à ta grand' violence,  
 Seulz à-part demenans une seconde dance,  
 L'un deçà, l'autre là, comme ilz sont agitez  
 Des discordans accordz de leur diversitez:  
 Ainsi guidant premier si grande compagnie,  
 Tu fais une si douce & plaisante harmonie,  
 Que noz luz ne sont rien aux prix des moindres sons  
 Qui resonnent là haut de diverses façons.

(L. VIII. 142-44. 29-44)

(The spirit of the everlasting God which advances your course, perfused within you, like a great spring of water, gives you life on all sides and movement, causing you to spin round in a sphere in order to be more perfect, for in roundness resides perfection, which abounds entirely within itself. With your initial movement, quite unlike all others, you draw the bodies of the universe backwards, even though they show great resistance to your powerful violence, as they lead, alone and to one side, a second dance, one here, another there, as they are moved by the discordant harmony of their diversity. Thus, being the first to lead so great a company, you create such a sweet and pleasing harmony that our lutes are nothing com-

pared to the slightest sounds which re-echo up above in diverse fashions.)

In this way, there is a kind of double progress in the hymns: on the one hand, from the strife and discord represented in the first five hymns to the peace and concord of the translunar world in the last five; on the other, an increasing sense of optimism concerning the human condition, even in the sublunar hymns, as the collection moves from the outer hymns to the center. As we shall see, this marks a contrast with the *Second Livre des Hymnes*, which starts off with the perfection of the translunar world and becomes progressively more pessimistic.

As we have already noted, *Les Daimons* (L. VIII. 115–39) is central to the collection both in terms of its position and its subject: the demons occupy the space between the sublunar and the translunar worlds. The poem has already received a considerable amount of scholarly attention, in particular from Albert-Marie Schmidt and from Germaine Lafeuille, so I do not intend to spend too much time discussing it.<sup>3</sup> However, a couple of additions might usefully be made concerning possible sources, since these have implications for other hymns in the collection.

Lines 1–50 consist of a lengthy dedication to Lancelot Carle, in which his poetic prowess in Latin and French is mentioned, and lines 51–58 then introduce the main topic of the poem:

Quand l'ETERNEL bastit la grand'maison du monde,  
Il peupla de poissons les abysmes de l'Onde,  
D'hommes la Terre, & l'air de Daimons, & les Cieux  
D'Ange, à celle-fin qu'il n'y eut point de lieux  
Vagues dans l'Univers, &, selon leurs natures,  
Qu'ilz fussent tous remplis de propres creatures.

(lines 59–64)

(When the everlasting God built the great mansion of the world, he populated the depths of the sea with fish, the earth with men, and the air with demons and the heavens with

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<sup>3</sup> See Albert-Marie Schmidt, *La Poésie scientifique en France au seizième siècle* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1938), and Germaine Lafeuille, *Cinq hymnes de Ronsard*, THR 128 (Geneva: Droz, 1973).

angels, so that there should be no empty spaces in the universe and that they should all be filled, according to their natures, with fitting creatures.)

Although Psellus and Apuleius have been singled out as the principal sources for this poem,<sup>4</sup> the lines just cited seem to correspond to certain ideas expounded by Proclus in his commentary on the *Timaeus*, a work which I have argued elsewhere was central to Ronsard's philosophical views in the four seasonal hymns:<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, since the world must be complete in its totality, we must also imagine, as accompanying the divine generations, those other generations which are engendered with them before our souls, which he will create a little later on. For the generation of demons fills all the space between the gods and men. (165; 5. 21)

Ronsard goes on to explain that his angels, who are incorporeal and eternal, partake of the nature of God:

Car ilz ne sont qu'Espris divins, parfaictz & purs,  
Qui congnoissent les ans tant passez, que futurs,  
Et tout l'estat mondain, comme voyant les choses  
De pres, au seing de DIEV, où elles sont encloses.  
(lines 69-72)

(For they are simply divine spirits, perfect and pure, who know the past as well as the future years and the entire condition of the world, as they see things close to, in the bosom of God where they are enclosed.)

As Proclus writes:

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<sup>4</sup> Laumonier mentions Psellus' *Περὶ ἐνέργειας τῶν δαιμόνων* and Apuleius' *De deo Socratis* as Ronsard's principal sources (L. VIII. 118. n. 3).

<sup>5</sup> See my paper "Neoplatonic Fictions in the *Hymnes* of Ronsard," in *Philosophical Fictions and the French Renaissance*, ed. Neil Kenny (London: The Warburg Institute, 1991), 45-55. There is a French translation of Proclus' commentary by A. J. Festugière, *Commentaire sur le Timée*, 5 vols. (Paris: Vrin, 1966-68). The references are given in the form of page references to the Teubner edition of Diehl, followed by volume and page number in the Festugière translation.

Moreover, the angelic generation proceeds according to the intellectual life of the Demiurge, which is why it is endowed with intellect in its essence and interprets and transmits divine Thoughts to inferior beings. (165; 5. 22)

Ronsard's demons, on the other hand, are possessed of a "corps leger" (line 77) and like clouds take on many shapes (lines 91-94):

Tout ainsi les DAIMONS qui ont le corps habile,  
Aisé, souple, dispost, à se muer facile,  
Changent bien tost de forme, & leur corps agile est  
Transformé tout soudain en tout ce que leur plaist.

(In the same way, Demons, who have nimble, pliant, supple, ready, easily transformable bodies, soon change shape, and their active bodies are rapidly turned into whatever shape they please.)

As Proclus says:

The generation of demons keeps an analogy with infinite Life, which is why it progresses everywhere according to a multiplicity of classes and offers many kinds and shapes. (165; 5. 21)

Moreover, Proclus sees his demons organized in series or chains of beings which share similar characteristics:

For each god marches at the head of a cohort which has received his own type, and for this reason, the heavenly angels and demons are suspended from the heavenly gods, generative angels and demons from the generative gods . . . even human souls which have recognized the gods which preside over them and command them have designated themselves according to the names of these gods. (166; 5. 22)

This, of course, corresponds to Ronsard's third, pagan, explanation on the origin of demons:

D'autres ont estimé qu'il n'y avoit Planette  
Qui n'en eust dessouz elle une bande subiette,  
Par qui sont les mortelz en vivant gouvernez,  
Selon l'Astre du Ciel soubz lequel ilz sont nez.  
(lines 191-94)



(Others believed that there was not a single planet which did not have a dependent troop beneath it, by which mortals are governed during their lifetime according to the heavenly star beneath which they were born.)

In fact, it is the view that Ronsard goes on to validate, starting in line 201, and which has important implications for the *Hymne de l'Eternité* and the seasonal hymns.

In terms of the collection as a whole, *Les Daimons* explains how the translunar and the sublunar worlds are linked. As intermediaries between the two realms, the demons are forces both for good and for evil. They may reveal truths, inspire poets, and lead souls back to God (lines 209–22), or they may cause confusion and turmoil, deceive and terrify us (lines 223–30). In the other poems of the collection, we see both negative and positive effects at work. In considering these works, I shall take them in the linked contrasting pairs which I see as accounting for the structure of the collection.

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One would have thought that the *Hymne du treschrestien roy de France, Henry II. de ce nom* (L. VIII. 5–46) would be an entirely eulogistic piece, given that its purpose, among other things, is to persuade the king to support Ronsard while he composed the *Franciade*. Moreover, it draws much of its inspiration from Theocritus, *Idyll* 17, a panegyric of Ptolemy. However, beyond superficial praise of the king, the details tend to center upon the theme of war—virtually the only area of endeavor at which he is successful. Even this fame will be lost without the immortalizing powers of poetry:

Les anciens Herôs du sang des Dieux venuz,  
Sont encore aujourd'hui, malgré les ans, congnus,  
Pour avoir fait chanter aux Poëtes leurs gestes  
Qui les ont de mortelz mis au rang des celestes:  
Et j'en veux faire ainsi! (lines 9–13)

(The ancient heroes, descended from divine blood, are still known today, despite the passage of years, because they had the poets sing of their feats, who placed them from the ranks of mortals into the ranks of the gods; and I wish to do likewise!)

Like Theocritus in his praise of Ptolemy, Ronsard claims he finds it impossible to know which of Henry II's virtues to begin with (lines 35–74), but finally alights upon his martial qualities:

Il t'a premierement, quant à la forte taille,  
Fait comme un de ces Dieux qui vont à la bataille,  
Ou de ces Chevaliers qu'Homere nous a peints  
Si vaillans devant Troïe, Ajax, & les germains  
Rois pasteurs de l'armée, & le dispos Achille,  
Qui, r'embarrant de coups les Troïens à leur ville,  
Comme un loup les aigneaux par morceaux les hachoit,  
Et des fleuves le cours d'hommes mortz empeschoit.

(lines 83–90)

(As for your strong stature, he made you in the first place like one of the gods who go into battle, or one of those knights whom Homer painted for us, so valiant before Troy, Ajax, and the brother kings, shepherds of the host, and nimble Achilles who, driving back with his blows the Trojans to their city, hacked them to pieces as a wolf hacks lambs, and stopped the flow of rivers with dead men.)

Next, in an image used in the 1549 entry of Henry II into Paris (fig. 21), the king is compared to Castor and Pollux rolled into one:<sup>6</sup>

Or' parle qui voudra de Castor & Pollux,  
Enfans jumeaux d'un œuf, tu merites trop plus  
De renom qu'ilz n'ont fait, d'autant que tu assemble'  
En toy ce que les deux eurent jadis ensemble:  
L'un fut bon Chevalier, l'autre bon Escrimeur,  
Mais tu as de ces deux en toy le double honneur.

(lines 97–102)

(Now let him speak who will of Castor and Pollux, twins issued from one egg, you deserve far more renown than they, in as much as you combine in yourself the qualities which they once shared. One was a good horseman, the other a good swordsman, but you have the double glory of these two in yourself.)

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<sup>6</sup> See below, chapter 6, for a fuller discussion of the use made of the Dioscuri in Renaissance iconography and literature.

However, it is noticeable that it is, once again, only the military prowess of the heavenly twins that is stressed here, not their poetic or harmonious qualities.

Ronsard goes on praising the king's martial and equestrian skills (lines 103–56). “Mais qui pourroit conter les biens de ton esprit?” he asks in line 157. “Tu es sobre en propos, pensif & taciturne, / Qui sont les plus beaux dons de l'astre de Saturne” (“You are sober in speech, thoughtful and quiet, which are the finest gifts of the planet Saturn”) (lines 167–68), an idea presented more starkly in *Les Daimons*, line 195: “Ceux de Saturne font l'homme melancholique” (“Saturn's make man melancholy”). However, what is he thinking about?

... il pense en luy combien  
Il luy faut de soudars pour dresser une armée,  
Quelle ville n'est pas de rampars bien fermée,  
Comme on peut l'assaillir, si ses frontieres sont  
Garnies comme il faut, & quelz soudars y vont,  
A fin de les garder, & comme il doit surprendre  
Quelque place Espaignolle, & François la rendre.  
(lines 174–80)

(... he thinks to himself how many soldiers he needs to raise an army, which town is not properly enclosed by ramparts, how it can be attacked, whether his borders are properly supplied, and which soldiers are going there to guard them, and how he is to take some Spanish fort by surprise and make it French.)

Ronsard does manage to praise his memory (lines 181–96), his powers of endurance (lines 197–209—“Mais un jour, voire deux, tu soutiens le labeur / Du harnois sus l'eschine ...”), his willingness to listen to advice (lines 210–24), and his justice and clemency, especially to those from good military families (lines 225–56). Ambition is banished from the court (lines 257–64).

The king's generosity—to native soldiers and foreign mercenaries, and to artists—is also mentioned:

On ne voit Artizan, en son art excellent,  
Maçon, Peintre, Poète, ou Escrimeur vaillant,  
A qui ta plaine main, de grace, n'eslargisse  
Quelque digne present de son bel artifice,

Et c'est l'occasion, ô magnanime Roy,  
 Que chacun te vient voir, & veut chanter de toy.  
 (lines 285-90)

(No craftsman is to be seen, supreme in his art, be he mason, painter, poet, or valiant swordsman, to whom your bountiful hand, out of good will, does not generously bestow some gift worthy of his fine artistry, and this is the cause, oh generous King, for every one coming to see you and wishing to sing of you.)

He is "debonnaire" to all and sundry (lines 291-314), and has demonstrated his filial piety to Francis I by erecting a magnificent tomb to him and other members of his family, a visual memory to his greatness. (This, of course, stands in the basilica of St.-Denis, and was designed and executed by Philibert Delorme and Pierre Bontemps.)

Et certes, qui plus est, de rechef tu l'honores  
 Comme un Filz pitoyable apres sa mort encores,  
 Environnant son corps d'un tombeau somptueux,  
 Où le docte cizeau d'un art presomptueux  
 A le marbre animé de batailles gravées,  
 Et des guerres par luy jadis parachevées.  
 (lines 319-24)

(Certainly, moreover, you honor him again as a tender son even after his death, surrounding his body with a magnificent tomb, on which the learned chisel, with boldest art, has brought the marble to life with engraved battles and the wars formerly concluded by him.)

He himself surpasses his father in one respect:

Tu le passes d'autant (quant aux faitz de la guerre)  
 Qu'Achille fist Pelée, & qu'Ajax Telamon. . .  
 (lines 332-33)

(You exceed him [in feats of war] as much as Achilles did Peleus and Ajax Telamon. . .)

Lines 345-76 present details of his mother and his birth. Given the emphasis in this hymn on war, there seems to be something ironic in the words spoken by the nymphs of the Seine:



... Crois Enfant, Enfant pren' accroissance,  
 Pour l'ornement de nous & de toute la France  
 (lines 363-64)

(Grow, child, increase in size, child, for the ornament of ourselves and the whole of France)

echoing as they do the words Ovid attributes to Ocyrhoë on the birth of the god of healing, Aesculapius:

adspicit infantem "toto" que "salutifer orbi  
 cresce puer!" dixit; "tibi se mortalia saepe  
 corpora debebunt. . ."  
 (*Metamorphoses* 2. 642-44)

(She looked upon the child and said: "Child, health-bringer to the whole world, grow! Often will mortal bodies owe their lives to you. . .")

The details in this section concerning the eagle should be compared to the passage in *Les Daimons* on good demons (L. VIII. 126. 221-22):<sup>7</sup>

Ainsi, en te baisant, prophetisoient ces Dieux,  
 Quand un Aigle volant bien haut dedans les cieux  
 (Augure bon aux Roys) trois fois dessus ta teste  
 Fist un grand bruit, suivy d'une gauche tempeste.  
 (lines 369-72)

(Thus, as they kissed you, did these gods prophesy, when an eagle flying high up in the heavens [a good omen for kings] three times above your head made a loud noise, followed by a storm on your left.)

Also to be compared with *Les Daimons* (L. VIII. 125. 191-200) are lines 377-90, where Ronsard speaks of different ranks of humans being in the same series as their tutelary gods. Kings are presided over by Jupiter ("Mais du grand Jupiter les Roys tiennent leur estre,"

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<sup>7</sup> "... par eux l'Aigle se meit / Sur le chef de Tarquin, qui grand Roy le predict."  
 As Laumonier indicates (L. VIII. 126. n. 3), this is taken from Apuleius, *De deo Socratis* (7. 135).

line 380) one of whose attributes was the eagle, and this whole idea gives rise to a host of comparisons between the court of Henry II and of Jupiter, very much in keeping with the iconography of the period (lines 423–96):

Si Jupiter se vante avoir sous sa puissance  
 Plus de Dieux que tu n'as, il est de ce qu'il pense  
 Trompé totalement: s'il se vante d'un Mars,  
 Tu en as plus de cent qui meinent tes soudars,  
 Messeigneurs de Vandosme, & messeigneurs de Guise,  
 De Nemours, de Nevers, qui la guerre ont aprise  
 Dessous ta Majesté.

(If Jupiter boasts of having under his control more gods than you, he is completely mistaken in what he thinks: if he boasts of one Mars, you have more than a hundred who lead your soldiers, the Vendôme family, the Guises, Nemours, Nevers, who learnt to war beneath your Majesty.)

The château de Tanlay contains a well-known fresco of Henry II's court in which the members are represented as Olympian gods in this way (fig. 22). Moreover, this process of typological comparison is essentially the same as that involved in the comparison between Hercules and Christ in the *Hercule Chrestien*.

Lines 497–528 contain praise of France and the French people in the same manner as Theocritus' praise of Egypt in *Idyll* 17. The analogy between Henry and Jupiter is continued in the short hypotyposis describing the king's Cyclopes producing his weapons of war like Jupiter's thunderbolts:

Les autres nuit & jour fondent artillerie,  
 Et grandz Cyclopes nudz font une baterie,  
 A grandz coups de marteaux, & avec tel compas,  
 D'ordre l'un apres l'autre au Ciel levent les bras,  
 Puis en frappent si haut sur le metal qui sonne,  
 Que l'Archenal prochain & le fleuve en resonance.

(lines 523–28)

(Others, night and day, cast canons and great naked Cyclopes are beating with great hammer blows, and so exactly, in order, one after the other raise their arms skywards, then strike from

such a height on the resounding metal that the nearby Arsenal and the river re-echo.)

(The city's arsenal had stood on the banks of the Seine since 1512, and Henry II took it over to form the Royal Arsenal.) One might compare this passage to lines 7–18 of the ode *Des Peintures contenues dedans un tableau* (see above, chap. 2, and also fig. 4). Henry is unique in the unity of his kingdom, with even the natural world paying him homage (lines 529–54). Statues might be seen everywhere bearing his features, if he did not prevent this (lines 555–66).

The poem then returns to the martial theme: Henry's victories over the English, Charles V, the Spaniards, and the Italians (lines 567–672), echoing, perhaps, the king's motto: "Donec totum impleat orbem." Once again, Ronsard sees future generations as remembering the king for his carnage:

Certes un temps viendra qu'aux champs de ce païs  
 Les Laboureux de là seront tous esbahys  
 De heurter de leur soc tant de salades vaines,  
 Et de choquer les ôs de tant de Capitaines  
 Assommés de ta main, et les portant ches eux  
 Loüront, plus qu'aujourd'uy, tes faitz victorieux,  
 Et diront estonnez: Quiconques fut le Prince,  
 Qui de tant de tombeaux chargea nostre Province,  
 Il fut heureux & fort, on le cognoist aux os  
 De ces hommes tués, les tesmoings de son los.

(lines 641–50)

(Certainly a time will come when, in the fields of this land, ploughmen will be quite astonished at striking with their ploughs so many empty helmets and at hitting the bones of so many captains struck down by your hand; and bearing them home, they will praise your victorious feats more than today, and say in amazement: "Whoever the prince was who loaded our province with so many tombs, he was fortunate and strong, as you can tell from the bones of these slaughtered men, the witnesses of his glory.")

This section ends with a curious apologia for the fact that Henry's victories are not so extensive as those of Julius Caesar or Augustus:

... il est plus difficile  
 De gagner maintenant une petite Ville  
 Que jadis à Cesar un royaume acquerir.  
 (lines 663-65)

(... it is harder now to win a little town than once for Caesar to gain a kingdom.)

Lines 673-718 deal with recent and actual battles, and include an allegorical hypotyposis depicting the horrors of war:

On oit de tous costés les armeures tonner,  
 On n'oit pres de la Meuse autre chose sonner  
 Que mailles, & boucliers, & Mars, qui se pourmene  
 A costé de Mesiere & des bois de l'Ardene,  
 S'egaye en son harnois dedans un char monté,  
 De quatre grandz coursiers horriblement porté.  
 La Fureur & la Peur leur conduisent la bride,  
 Et la Fame emplumée, allant devant pour guide,  
 Laisse avec un grand flot ça & là parmy l'air  
 Sous le vent des chevaux son panage voler,  
 Et Mars, qui de son char les espauls luy presse,  
 D'un espieu Tracien contraint cette Deesse  
 De cent langues semer des bruits & vrais & faux,  
 Pour effroyer l'Europe & la remplir de maux.  
 (lines 693-706)

(On all sides can be heard the thunder of arms; near the Meuse nothing else can be heard but coats of mail, shields; and Mars, at large beside Mézières and the woods of the Ardennes, is disporting himself in his armor, mounted on a chariot frighteningly drawn by four great coursers. Madness and Terror lead their bridles, and winged Rumor, preceding them as guide, lets her plumes fly with a great surge in all directions in the air, beneath the wind of the horses, and Mars, urging her on from behind in his chariot, forces this goddess with a Thracian javelin to disseminate in a hundred tongues both true and false rumors, to terrify Europe and fill it with evils.)

This triumph scene recalls both the paintings inspired by Petrarch's *Trionfi* and the floats used in triumphal entries at this time, with their



elaborate use of allegorical figures in the didactic tradition (e.g., fig. 19).

All this serves as an introduction to Ronsard's promise to immortalize the king, and *ominatio* about what happens if the Muses are neglected (lines 719–48). The final section of the hymn, the valedictory prayer for victory (lines 749–76), is also ambivalent:

Or' puis que noz deux Roys les plus grandz des humains  
N'ont voulu recevoir la Paix entre leurs mains,  
Que DIEU leur envoyoit, comme sa Fille esleüe

.....

Il vaut mieux prier DIEU qu'aux François il envoye  
Contre noz ennemys Victoire.

(lines 749–51, 760–61)

(Now since our two kings, the mightiest of mortals, have been unwilling to receive the peace which God sent them to grasp, his chosen daughter . . . it is better to pray God to send victory to the French against our foes.)

In other words, a French victory is only the second best thing to an agreed peace.

Henry II, then, may be the greatest of mortal princes, under the tutelage of, or even rivalling, Jupiter. Yet the world over which he presides is dominated by the discord of Mars, and he himself excels only in martial pursuits. This superficially eulogistic hymn is far from being the sycophantic work it has sometimes appeared to critics, and it forms a sharp contrast to the *Hercule Chrestien* in which we are presented with the divine—translunar—representation of God on earth.

Interestingly enough, Hercules appears in Theocritus' panegyric of Ptolemy as a heavenly figure from whom the king, like Alexander the Great, traced his descent (lines 20–33); moreover, the legend of the Gallic Hercules was an important one for French nationalism, as we have seen above.<sup>8</sup> By contrast, it is also noteworthy that, of all the Valois monarchs, Henry II was the least frequently compared to Hercules.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See chapter 3.

<sup>9</sup> See Jung, *Hercule dans la littérature française*, p. 164.

The idea of comparing Hercules and Christ came naturally to the syncretic spirit of the Renaissance, and perhaps the pagan demigod's position as the ideal Stoic hero helped in this. As a literary and artistic device, the typological comparison had a long history. Old Testament events were regularly linked with the life of Christ in medieval biblical exegesis (for example, Elijah's ascent into heaven = Christ's ascension), and one of the most complete and beautiful examples of this is the series of stained-glass windows in the chapel of King's College, Cambridge. Equally, the lives of saints might be compared with that of Christ. An obvious example of this is the upper church of San Francesco at Assisi, where the events in the life of St. Francis are presented in order to "emphasize not Francis's poverty but his conformity to Christ."<sup>10</sup>

The device was also used satirically. George Buchanan wrote a long iambic poem against the Portuguese Antonio Morris de Silva, abbot of Thomar, in which the abbot is satirized at length; for example:<sup>11</sup>

Christi parentum nemo vidit alterum:  
Nec ipsa mater novit Antonî patrem.  
Uterque pastor, noster hac parte est prior;  
Hic pascit herbis, ille verbis paverat.  
Ut quinque panibus ille quinque millia  
Saturavit, iste (ne saturitas noxia  
Animae inquinaret puritatem, ut arbitror)  
Ad quinque panes quinque plebis millia  
Redegit; ut, si quid supersit, ut reor,  
Fragmenta posset absque cophino tollere.  
(*Fratres fraterrimi* 1. 14–23)

(Nobody saw the second of Christ's parents, nor did even his mother know Anthony's father. Both were shepherds, but ours is foremost in this role; the one nourishes with grass, the other had nourished with his words. Just as the one had fed

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<sup>10</sup> See Vincent Moleta, *From St. Francis to Giotto: The Influence of St. Francis on Early Italian Art and Literature* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983), 59. Many other examples of the conformity of Francis's life with Christ are cited in the course of the book.

<sup>11</sup> *Opera omnia*, ed. Peter Burman, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1725), 2. 283–84.

the five thousand with five loaves of bread, the other [lest harmful plenty corrupt the soul's purity, I imagine] reduced five thousand common folk to five loaves of bread; so that if any remained, I suppose, he would be able to remove the pieces without a basket.)

Ronsard's typological comparison is perfectly serious, however, and very much in keeping with his view that the ancients had received partial knowledge of the true God, but in a garbled form (cf. L. VIII. 212. 85-92). Before entering into the heart of the matter, there is a lengthy introductory section, which contains two central ideas:

(1) God created the world for the benefit of mankind (lines 27-48), introducing into it Time, which reflects divine order:

Tu as pour nous en ce monde ordonnée  
Egalement la course de l'année,  
Pour nous monstrier par son train regulier,  
Combien tu es en tes faictz singulier.

(lines 35-38)

(For us, you ordered evenly in this world the course of the year, to show us by its regular progress how unique you are in your accomplishments.)

This echoes Plato's words in the *Timaeus*:<sup>12</sup>

When the father who had begotten it saw it set in motion and alive, a shrine brought into being for the everlasting gods, he rejoiced and being well pleased he took thought to make it yet more like its pattern. So as that pattern is the Living Being that is for ever existent, he sought to make this universe also like it, so far as might be, in that respect. Now the nature of that Living Being was eternal, and this character it was impossible to confer in full completeness on the generated thing. But he took thought to make, as it were, a moving likeness of eternity; and, at the same time that he ordered the Heaven, he

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<sup>12</sup> The translation is by Francis M. Cornford in *Plato's Cosmology: The "Timaeus" of Plato Translated with a Running Commentary* (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1957), 97-98.

made, of eternity that abides in unity, an everlasting likeness moving according to number—that to which we have given the name Time. (37C–37D)

In other words, it seems likely that Christian ideas about the creation are synthesized here with Platonic ones.

(2) The Messiah's coming was foretold to the Jews (lines 49–68) and the gentiles (lines 69–102), but in both cases, the prophecies were ignored or misunderstood. Again, this fits in with the Renaissance belief that ancient philosophers like Plato had received divine illumination.

The parallels between the life of Christ and Hercules take up the second half of the poem (lines 151–284) with a brief valediction to Odet de Châtillon completing the work (lines 285–96). Ronsard's sense of balance is obvious in the poem, which falls into four main sections:

Introduction	1–26	= 26 lines
God's relationship with His creation	27–150	= 134 lines
Parallels between Christ and Hercules	151–284	= 134 lines
Valediction to Odet de Châtillon	285–96	= 12 lines

In other words, the two central sections of the poem are exactly the same length, with the first one dealing with the unsatisfactory nature of God's relationship with His creation, and the second section presenting the optimistic counterpoise to this: God enters His creation to provide a means of salvation. This message could be seen as emblematic of the whole collection.

Like other hagiographical works, the events in the lives of Hercules and Christ are ordered, broadly speaking, chronologically, but starting and finishing outside of encosmic time. Jupiter holds up time when he is with Alcmena, while three years are necessary to prepare the birth of Christ (lines 151–58); Hercules marries the goddess of youth, Hebe,<sup>13</sup> and Christ marries Eternity, thus escaping encosmic time again (lines 271–74). The main emphasis in the other events narrated concerns, as one would expect, Christ/Hercules' defeat of evil

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<sup>13</sup> Dorat had commented on this in his lectures on Homer. Speaking of *Odyssey* 11. 601, he is reported as saying: "Hercules Hebem uxorem duxerat nam praemium veris bonis post hanc mortem assignatur perpetua iuventus id est immortalitas." See fol. 9<sup>r</sup> of the Milan manuscript.



and sin, and the victory over death. All of the parallel events are carefully explained, and in general, the mythological ones present more clearly recognizable pictorial images, as in, for example, lines 183–94:

Hé qu'est-ce apres d'Hesionne de Troye  
 Contre un rocher liée, pour la proye  
 D'un ourque grand? qu'est-ce de Prométhé  
 Dessus Caucase aux Aigles garrotté,  
 Lesquelz Alcide affranchit, hors de peine  
 Les delivrant? *si-non Nature humaine,*  
*J'entens Adam, que CHRIST a detaché*  
*Par sa bonté des liens de Peché,*  
*Lors que sa Loy comme un Aigle sans cesse*  
*Luy pinçetoit son ame pecheresse*  
*Sans nul espoir, avant que par la Foy*  
*De CHRIST la Grace eust combatu la Loy.*

(Next, what is the meaning of Hesione of Troy attached to a rock to be fed to a great sea monster? What is the meaning of Prometheus bound on Caucasus for the eagles, whom Hercules freed, delivering them from anguish? if not human nature, I mean Adam, whom Christ released in his goodness from the bonds of sin, when his Law like an eagle incessantly pecked at his sinful soul without hope, until through faith the grace of Christ had conquered the Law.)

Ronsard returned to the subject of Hesione's misfortune in Book 2 of the *Franciade* in an ecphrasis describing a golden cup presented by Hector to Idomeneus. On the cup:

... vivoit entaillée  
 Soubz le burin la Balaine écaillée  
 Ouvrant la gueule, & faignant un semblant  
 De devorer le pauvre corps tremblant  
 De la pucelle Hesione attachée  
 Contre un rocher: la mer estoit couchée,  
 Au pié du roc, qui de flots repliez  
 De la pucelle alloit baignant les piez.

(L. XVI. 123. 601–8)

(... was a lifelike engraving of the scaly whale, opening its jaws, and making as if to devour the poor trembling body of the maid Hesione, attached to a rock; the sea was spread out at the foot of the crag, bathing the maid's feet with breaking waves.)

Hesione was the daughter of Laomedon, the founder of Troy. After Apollo and Neptune had built the walls of the city, Laomedon refused to pay them the agreed sum, so Neptune punished the king by flooding the country and demanding that his daughter be sacrificed to a sea monster. Natalis Comes interprets this story of perjured faith as an example of what happens if religious worship is neglected:<sup>14</sup>

At calamitates, quas pro neglecto Neptuno passus est, quid aliud significant quam Dei cultum sine calamitate non neglegi?  
(fol. 53<sup>v</sup>)

(But what other meaning do the disasters which he suffered as a result of his neglect of Neptune have than that the worship of God cannot be neglected without disaster?)

The rescue of Hesione by Hercules is thus a suitable example, like that of Prometheus (lines 185–86), of man's redemption.

Lines 219–24 have usually been interpreted as referring to Hercules' receiving the poisoned tunic of the centaur Nessus, sent by his former wife, Deianeira (see Laumonier's comments, L. VIII. 219. n. 3, and Jung, *Hercule dans la littérature française*, p. 118). However, this spoils the chronology of the poem, as Hercules' death on Mount Oeta comes in lines 253–56. Rather, we have here an allusion to the somewhat more shocking story of how Hercules and his new wife Iole exchanged clothes, a story, as we have already seen, depicted by Primaticcio in the Porte dorée at Fontainebleau (see fig. 3), and which would later form the basis of the poem *Le Satyre* (L. XV. 67–76). From the chronological point of view, this follows on entirely logically from the previous section (lines 213–18) in which Hercules is seen as repudiating his first wife. In terms of the symbolism too it makes more sense, as Hercules receives his new wife's clothing rather

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<sup>14</sup> See the 1567 edition of the *Mythologiae*.

than a tunic belonging to the centaur Nessus and subsequently given to Hercules by Deianeira. As usual in Neo-Platonic symbolism, it is the most shocking myths that contain the profoundest mysteries. (Scholars have no doubt been led astray both by a misplaced sense of what is fitting and also by the reference in line 224 to Christ's death, "Estant vestu des habillementz d'elle.") However, everything is perfectly clear if we remember that in lines 213–18, Deianeira is shown as representing the Synagogue and Iole the Church: Christ, like Hercules, rejects his former "wife" in favor of a new one.<sup>15</sup>

Looked at from a Renaissance Neo-Platonic perspective, there is nothing in the *Hercule chrestien* that would have shocked those readers who were ready to see beyond the "fabuleux manteau" to the truth underlying myths, and it is a useful example of the way in which Ronsard himself may frequently have interpreted his reading in the pagan poets.

The next pair of poems to be considered is the *Hymne de la Justice* and the *Hymne de l'Or*, two poems which have received considerable scholarly attention. The *Hymne de la Justice* fits neatly into the *dispositio* I have suggested for the collection. It centers on the decline of man since the Golden Age, the possible return to primeval chaos, and some form of salvation being achieved through translunar intervention: divine Justice is incarnated in the cardinal de Lorraine. The poem is notable for its dramatic mode of presentation in the speeches of Justice, Jupiter, Clemence, Themis, of the hymn's dedicatee, the cardinal de Lorraine, and for its vivid pictorial representations.

The theme of the ages of man was often treated by painters.<sup>16</sup> However, Ronsard's Golden Age is presented largely in terms of the absence of certain faults. It is a time

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<sup>15</sup> The idea of seeing the Church and the Synagogue as contrasting brides goes back to the identification of Rachel and Leah with the Church and the Synagogue; cf. Isidore of Seville: "Lia Synagogae figuram habuit, quae infirmis oculis cordis sacramenta Dei speculari non potuit. Rachel vero clara aspectu Ecclesiae typum tenuit, quae contemplationis acie Christi mysteria cernit," ed. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus*, 83. 105. Leah, the elder sister, was Jacob's first wife, but he was really in love with Rachel whom he was eventually allowed to marry (Genesis 29).

<sup>16</sup> See Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, chapter 2, "The Early History of Man in Two Cycles of Paintings by Piero di Cosimo," 33–67.

Quand ces mots, *Tien & Mien*, en usage n'estoient,  
 Et quand les laboureurs du soc ne tormentoient  
 Par sillons incongneuz les entrailles encloses  
 Des champs, qui produisoient, de leur gré, toutes choses,  
 Et quand les mariniers ne pallissoient encor'  
 Sur le dos de Thetis, pour amasser de l'or.

(L. VIII. 50-51. 53-58)

(when the words "mine" and "yours" were not in use, and when ploughmen did not torture with their ploughshares in unheard-of furrows the protected entrails of the fields, which produced all things of their own accord, and when sailors still did not grow pale on Thetis' back in order to pile up gold.)

It is interesting to see, following the hymn to Henry II's martial feats, that when the age of iron is ushered in, it is war that is presented as one of the principal evils of mankind:

Adoncq Fraude & Proces envahirent la terre,  
 Poison, Rancœur, Debat, & l'homicide Guerre,  
 Qui faisant craqueter le fer dedans ses mains  
 Marchoit pesamment sur le chef des humains,  
 Et violoit par tout de sa hache meurtriere  
 Des vieux siecles passez la concorde premiere.

(lines 115-20)

(Then Fraud and Lawsuits invaded the earth, Poison, Malice, Strife, and murderous War, which, clashing its weapon in its hands, marched heavily on mortals' heads, and everywhere violated with its lethal axe the former harmony of the old bygone centuries.)

Justice's second speech presents a vivid picture of the earth and the human condition in their deteriorated states:

Il faudra que les bœufz aux champs tu aiguillonnes,  
 Et que du soc aigu la terre tu seillonnes,  
 Et que soir & matin le labeur de ta main  
 Nourrisse pour jamais ta miserable fain:  
 Car en punition de tes fautes malines,  
 Les champs ne produiront que ronces & qu'espines.  
 Le printemps, qui souloit te rire tous les jours,



Pour ta mechanceté perdra son premier cours,  
Et sera departy en vapeurs chaleureuses,  
Qui halleront ton corps de flammes douloureuses,  
En frimatz, & en pluye, & en glace, qui doit  
Faire transir bientost ton pauvre corps de froid:  
Ton chef deviendra blanc en la fleur de jeunesse,  
Et jamais n'ateindras les bornes de vieillesse.

.....

Qui pis est, Indigence & la Famine aussi,  
Hostes de ta maison, te donneront soucy  
Tousjours sans te lâcher, & les femmes muables  
N'enfanteront des filz à leurs peres semblables,  
Tout sera corrompu, & les races seront  
Meslées d'autre genre, & s'abastardiront.  
DIEU te fera mourir au milieu des batailles,  
Accablé l'un sur l'autre....

(lines 139–52, 161–68)

(You will have to goad the oxen in the fields, furrow the earth with the sharp plough, and day and night the toil of your hand will for ever have to feed your wretched hunger; for to punish your evil errors, the fields will produce only brambles and thorns, springtime, which used to smile upon you every day, will lose its original course on account of your wickedness and will disappear in hot vapors which will burn your body with painful flames, in freezing fog, in rain, in ice, which will soon numb your poor body with cold; your hair will turn white in the prime of youth and you will never reach the frontier of old age. . . . What is worse, Poverty and Famine, too, guests in your house, will for ever trouble you without respite, and fickle women will not give birth to sons who resemble their fathers; everything will be corrupt, and generations will be mingled with other kinds and turn into mongrels. God will make you die in the midst of battles, piled down on each other. . . .)

All of these topoi—man's unending labor to provide food for himself, the end of perpetual spring and the inhospitality of the earth and its climate, the loss of eternal youth, sexual promiscuity, and

man's violence to his fellow man—are central in Renaissance paintings which deal with the ages of man, as well as in the poetry of the period.<sup>17</sup>

The syncretism in this poem, which is emphasized by the interchangeability of "Dieu" and "Jupiter," and Ronsard's choice of incidents and themes that are appropriate to both the Judeo-Christian and the classical pagan traditions, is made explicit in lines 473–76:

Car Jupiter, Pallas, Apollon, sont les noms  
Que le seul DIEU reçoit en maintes nations  
Pour ses divers effectz que l'on ne peut comprendre,  
Si par mille surnoms on ne les fait entendre.<sup>18</sup>

(For Jupiter, Pallas, Apollo are the names which the one God receives in many nations on account of his various works, which cannot be understood unless they are signified by a thousand names.)

Thus Jupiter's evocation of the Flood (lines 247–64) is presented in vague enough terms to apply equally to the biblical version (Genesis 6–7) or the Ovidian version (*Metamorphoses* 1. 253–92). Specific textual allusions further reinforce this, including an apocalyptic picture of God about to punish mankind:

Une flamme de feu de ses yeux s'ecartoit,  
Et un glaive tranchant de sa bouche sortoit  
(lines 245–46)

(A flame of fire emanated from his eyes, and a sharp sword went out of his mouth);

compare Revelation 1. 14 and 16: "oculi eius tamquam flamma ignis . . . et de ore eius gladius utraque parte acutus exibat" ("his eyes were like a flame of fire . . . and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword").

When, as happens in Ovid's account, Jupiter is somewhat placated by those around him, he sends Justice back to earth at the accomplishment of Themis' prophecy concerning the reign of Henry II:

<sup>17</sup> "The Early History of Man," 53–54.

<sup>18</sup> Ronsard, as we have seen in chapter 2, expressed similar views in the *Abbrégé de l'art poétique françois* (L. XIV. 4. 8–19).

Comme il disoit telz motz, de JUSTICE entourna  
 Les yeux d'un bandeau noir, & puis il luy donna  
 Une balance d'or dedans la main senestre,  
 Et un glaive tranchant au millieu de la dextre:  
 Le glaive, pour punir ceux qui seront mauvais,  
 La balance, à poiser egalement les faictz  
 Des grands & des petits, comme Equité l'ordonne,  
 Le bandeau, pour ne voir en jugement personne.

(lines 409–16)

(As he spoke these words, he encircled Justice's eyes with a black blindfold, and then gave her a golden pair of scales in her left hand, and a sharp sword in her right hand: the sword to punish those who will be evil, the scales to weigh fairly the deeds of great and small, as commanded by Equity, the blindfold so that she should not see anyone when she sits in judgment.)

This didactic hypotyposis recalls the traditional portrayal of Justice (e.g., fig. 23), and as Germaine Lafeuille has pointed out, the allegorical figure appeared at numerous triumphal entries from the late fifteenth century onwards, including that of Henry II into Lyon as well as at his coronation in Reims.<sup>19</sup>

Once Justice has entered into the body of the cardinal de Lorraine, the prelate delivers to the king a warning against bellicose activity:

Ce n'est le tout que d'estre aux armes furieux,  
 Adroit, vaillant, & fort, il fault bien avoir mieux:  
 Il fault apres la guerre, ainsi qu'un sage Prince,  
 Gouverner par Justice & par Loix ta province,  
 A fin que tes subjects vivent en equité,  
 Et que ton ennemy par ta lance donté  
 Te reconnoisse autant justicier equitable  
 En paix, comme aux combatz t'a congnu redoutable.

(lines 437–44)

(Being frantic, skilful, bold, and strong in battle is not everything, you must have better than that: you must, after war, as

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<sup>19</sup> Lafeuille, *Cinq hymnes de Ronsard*, 85.

a wise prince, govern your province in justice and in accordance with the laws, so that your subjects live in equity and that your foe, when tamed by your lance, considers you in peace as equitable a judge as he found you terrifying in battle.)

The whole world is held in balance by universal laws, and human affairs too must be controlled by Justice. In consenting to this, the king allows the return of a new Golden Age:

Ainsi dis-tu, Prelat, & le Roy de sa teste  
 En l'abaissant un peu accorda ta requeste:  
 Et lors le siecle d'or en France retourna,  
 Qui sans se transformer depuis y sejourna,  
 Faisant fleurir le Droict soubz nostre Prince juste. . . .  
 (lines 531-35)

(These were your words, Prelate, and the king granted your request with a slight nod of his head. Then the Golden Age returned to France, and since then remained there without changing, causing right to flourish under our just prince. . . .)

This theme, with its Virgilian resonances,<sup>20</sup> allows the hymn to end on a generally optimistic note.

If the *Hymne de la Justice* is largely concerned with man's decline after the end of the Golden Age, the *Hymne de l'Or* (L. VIII. 179-205) is centered upon the beneficent presence of gold in the contemporary world. However, despite this apparently materialistic attitude, Ronsard warns that, while he may appear simply to be praising wealth, there is more to it than that:

Mais tout ainsi qu'Homere aquist la renommée  
 D'yvrongne, pour avoir en ses vers estimée  
 La Vigne, & de Bacchus les dons délicieux:  
 Ainsi j'auray le bruit d'estre avaricieux,  
 D'autant que je celebre en mes vers la Richesse.  
 Or', le peuple dira ce qu'il voudra, si esse  
 Qu'Homere ne fut pas yvrongne, pour avoir  
 Celebré par ses vers de Bacchus le pouvoir,

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<sup>20</sup> See Virgil's *Eclogue* 4, on the return of the Golden Age.



Ny moy avare aussi, bien qu'icy je m'efforce  
De celebrer de l'OR la noblesse & la force.

(lines 7–16)

(Now, the common folk will say what they will, nevertheless, Homer was not a drunkard because he celebrated in his poetry the power of Bacchus, and I am not greedy, even though I am attempting here to celebrate the nobility and might of Gold.)

Thus, Ronsard will praise the nobility and the power of gold.

This hymn gave rise in the 1960s to a notorious controversy over its interpretation, with Jean Frappier seeing it as concerning, amongst other things, the rise of capitalism in the France of the 1550s, while Bernard Weinberg rejected this view, asserting that the tone of the hymn was comic and satirical throughout. In more recent years, Guy Demerson and Daniel Ménager have moved the subject of debate to more fertile ground, considering the allegorical and philosophical implications of the hymn.<sup>21</sup>

The central myth about the discovery of gold (lines 267–316), which forms such a contrast to some of the more down-to-earth sections of the poem, provides the reader with some useful clues as to the poet's intentions. The Olympian gods are presented, displaying their various attributes for consideration, and Neptune is about to be acclaimed as the greatest of them because of his "grand's eaux" (line 269):

... Quand la Terre leur mere épointe de douleur  
Qu'un autre par sur elle emportoit cet honneur,  
Ouvrit son large sein, & au travers des fentes  
De sa peau, leur monstra les mines d'OR luisantes,  
Qui rayonnent ainsi que l'esclair du Soleil  
Quand il luist au midy, lors que son ardent œil  
N'est point environné de l'espais d'un nüage,  
Ou comme l'on voit luire au soir le beau visage

<sup>21</sup> See Frappier, "Tradition et actualité dans l'Hymne de l'Or de P. de Ronsard," in *Literary History and Literary Criticism*, edited by Leon Edel (New York: New York University Press, 1965), 126–49; Weinberg, "L'Hymne de l'Or de Ronsard: une interprétation," in *Saggi e ricerche di letteratura francese* 5 (1965), 9–40; Guy Demerson, *La Mythologie classique dans l'œuvre lyrique de la "Pléiade,"* THR 119 (Geneva: Droz, 1972), 408–12; Ménager, *Ronsard: le roi, le poète et les hommes*, THR 169 (Geneva: Droz, 1979), chapter 3.

De Vesper la Cyprine, allumant les beaux crins  
De son chef bien lavé dedans les flots marins.

(lines 277–86)

(... when their mother Earth, provoked with pain that another was winning this honor over her, opened her vast womb, and through the holes in her skin showed them the glowing mines of Gold, radiating light like the flash of the Sun when it shines at noon, when its burning eye is not surrounded by the mass of a cloud, or as we see glowing at dusk the beautiful face of the Evening Star, sacred to Venus, lighting up the beautiful locks of her hair which have been well washed in the waves of the sea.)

Whereupon, the Olympians use the Earth's gift to gild their persons and possessions.

The imagery has strong childbirth connotations: "épointe de douleur," "ouvrit son large sein," "au travers des fentes / De sa peau," and this alludes, no doubt, to Renaissance alchemical/scientific beliefs that all minerals, including the rarest and most perfect one, gold, are the result of the fusion of male and female (normally sulphur and mercury). In alchemical terms, Nature's sole aim is to produce gold, and the other metals are either to be considered as abortions or freaks, or they are intermediate steps in the process of maturation.<sup>22</sup> Gold, then, is the noblest of all metals, and in addition represents immortality and liberty; it is therefore entirely appropriate that Ronsard's gods should make liberal use of it. There is thus no satirical intention in describing Justice gilding her own attributes:

Et mesme la Justice à l'œil si renfronné  
Non plus que Jupiter ne l'a point dedaigné:  
Mais soudain congnoissant de cét OR l'excellence  
En fait broder sa robbe, & faire sa balance.

(lines 313–16)

(And even Justice, with such frowning gaze, did not scorn it any more than Jupiter; but immediately recognizing the excel-

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<sup>22</sup> See Mircea Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 48–52.

lence of this Gold, she had her robe embroidered with it and her scales made out of it.)

In fact, we shall see below in chapter 6 that Natalis Comes would interpret Jason's quest for the golden fleece as a search for the highest human qualities, and in particular, Justice.<sup>23</sup>

How does this central myth fit into the hymn as a whole? In the first place, it may be helpful to bear in mind the opening comparison between Homer's writing a hymn to Bacchus and Ronsard's writing a hymn to gold (lines 7–11). In either case, the nature of the dedicatee is ambivalent: Bacchus may represent no more than excessive drinking and intoxication, but also stands for Plato's mystic frenzy, the madness associated with religion; similarly, gold may simply connote great wealth, but it can also represent a noble, god-given gift which, like the Bacchic frenzy, is a means to an end. In this second sense, it can act as a powerful force for good in the world, allowing princes, poets, philosophers, and artists to accomplish their work without disturbance. It is only when gold is squandered or hoarded (in other words, when it is misused or unused) that it is not viewed positively by Ronsard.

To illustrate this, Ronsard uses three examples of avarice drawn from Homer: Priam who, though a king, was covered "with much dung that he had gathered in his hands as he grovelled upon the earth" (*Iliad* 24. 164–65); Odysseus' father, living in poverty in expectation of his son's return while Penelope and the suitors consume his wealth (*Odyssey* 11. 187–96); and Tantalus, suffering in Hades (*Odyssey* 11. 582–92). Laumonier comments in his notes on the inappropriate nature of the first two examples (L. VIII. 203. n. 3 and 204. n. 1), and even the Tantalus image is puzzling in that Tantalus' punishment is imposed upon him, while Ronsard's miser chooses to live as he does:

Tu souffres en vivant presque un pareil mal  
Que souffre dans l'enfer le malheureux Tantal',  
Qui mort de soif dans l'eau, & mort de fain, ne touche

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<sup>23</sup> Comes writes: "Est enim ipsa Medea μηδος consilium. Hic eius ope aureum vellus in patriam reportavit, Deisque dicavit, vel, ut aliis placuit, Peliae obtulit; cum maxime fugienda sit auaritia, & iustitia complectenda," 6. 8, fol. 180'.



Jamais le fruit qui pend à-l'entour de sa bouche,  
 Car alors qu'il le veut de ses levres toucher  
 Tousjours quelque malheur le garde d'approcher:  
 Ou l'onde se recule, ou le vent qui remüe  
 Le fruit, loing de son chef l'emporte dans la nuë:  
 Ainsi voulant manger, jamais ne mange rien:  
 Mais le vent ne ravist dans les nües ton bien,  
 Tu le vends au marché, & aux prochaines halles,  
 Aux yeux de tous venans, au plus offrant l'estalles,  
 A fin d'en r'apporter de l'argent à plain poing  
 Pour te laisser mourir de fain à ton besoing.  
 (lines 585-98)

(You suffer while still alive almost as much as the unfortunate Tantalus in the Underworld who, dying from thirst while in water and dying from hunger, never touches the fruit hanging around his mouth; for just when he means to touch it with his lips, some misfortune always prevents him from getting close: either the water retreats or the wind, moving the fruit, bears it away from his face into the clouds; so, although desiring to eat, he never eats anything; but the wind does not carry off your riches to the clouds; you sell them in the marketplace and the nearby markethall, in view of all comers, you display them to the highest bidder, in order to carry away fistfuls of money, leaving yourself to die of hunger in your need.)

However, the choice of the Tantalus comparison is explained by Dorat's commentary on this passage of the *Odyssey*:

Τάνταλος vero per quoddam anagrammatismum dicitur tantquam τάλαντον quod significat pecunias, opes immensas, et divitias. cum enim ingentia bona susque deque illi suppeterent, iis tamen nolebat uti itaque vere appellatur τάνταλος, miser et calamitosus, quales sunt omnes avari. (f. 9<sup>r</sup>)

(In fact, "Tantalos" by a process of anagram means "talanton" which denotes money, immense wealth, riches. For although he had great wealth at hand in all quarters, he was unwilling to use it and so he is rightly called Tantalos, wretched and unfortunate, as are all misers.)



It would seem that, at the end of a poem dedicated to him, Dorat is paid the compliment of an allusion to his own allegorical reading of Homer, and perhaps this is true of the other two examples as well.

There is much in this hymn which is repetitious and prosaic. Its essence, however, is that gold derives from the gods, and that, if properly used, it can help to recreate a new Golden Age in place of the lost Golden Age of the past (lines 168–86). This is a disconcerting poem because its imagery follows the Neo-Platonic tradition rather than the didactic tradition which is the norm in the 1555 hymns, but providing we do not expect a coherent *literal* message to emerge, its apparent inconsistencies can be accommodated.

There are thus thematic links between the two poems in the same orbit: Justice appears in the *Hymne de l'Or*, gold in the *Hymne de la Justice*, and both poems speak of a lost Golden Age, though with a generally more optimistic tone in the *Hymne de l'Or*.

Our next pair of poems, *Le Temple de Messeigneurs le Connestable, et des Chastillons* and the *Hymne de la Mort*, concerns the question of immortality: earthly immortality through poetry in the first poem of the pair, real immortality in the second one.<sup>24</sup> In the first poem, Ronsard produces an ecphrasis of an imaginary temple, built in honor of Anne de Montmorency and his nephews, the Coligny brothers.

The imagery used in this encomiastic poem is for the most part obvious. Anne de Montmorency's statue, in the shape of the god Mars, occupies the center of the building, "Ayant le glaive nud, tiré pour l'assurance / Des bons, & pour punir des vicieux l'offence" ("With a naked sword, unsheathed to assure the good and to punish the wrongdoings of the evil," lines 33–34). On one of the decorated columns set up to celebrate his military successes is depicted the god of the river Rhône, described in typical Renaissance style:

Le Rhosne d'autre part dedans ses eaux couché,  
Lâchant la bride longue à son fleuve épanché,  
D'une cruche versée, ayant la dextre mise  
Au menton herissé d'une moustache grise,

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<sup>24</sup> On the question of the relative merits of poetry and the plastics arts in conferring immortality, see Roberto E. Campo, "Mannerist Conflict and the Paragone in Ronsard's *Temple des Messeigneurs*," *L'Esprit Créateur* 33 (1993): 9–19.

Et portant une rame en la senestre main,  
Et une grand' fontaine au meillieu de son sein. . .

(lines 63–68)

(On the other side, the god of the Rhône lying in his waters, giving free rein to his fast-flowing river from an overturned pitcher, with his right hand placed on his chin which bristles with a grey moustachè, and bearing an oar in his left hand and a large fountain in the middle of his chest. . .)

Odet de Châtillon, in cardinal's garb (lines 95–97), is to be portrayed wearing an historiated robe:

Là, d'un art bien subtil j'ourdiray tout au tour  
La Verité, la Foy, l'Esperance & l'Amour,  
Et toutes les Vertuz qui regnerent à l'heure  
Que Saturne faisoit au monde sa demeure.  
Sur ceste robe apres sera portraict le front  
De Pinde, & d'Helicon, & de Cirrhe le mont,  
Les antres Thespiens, & les sacrez rivages  
De Pimple, & de Parnasse, & les divins bocages  
D'Ascre, & de Libetrie, & de Heme le val,  
Et Phebus, qui conduit des neuf Muses le bal.

(lines 99–108)

(On it, with exquisite artistry, I shall weave all around Truth, Faith, Hope, and Love, and all the virtues which reigned when Saturn dwelt in the world. Next on this robe will be depicted the summits of Pindus and Helicon and the mountain at Cirrha, the Thespian caves and the sacred shores of Pimpla and Parnassus, and the divine groves of Ascrea and Libethra, and the valley of Haemus, and Phoebus leading the dance of the nine Muses.)

Thus, the cardinal not only embodies both the Christian and the pagan virtues, but he is also an outstanding protector and patron of poetry.

His brother, the Admiral Gaspard de Coligny, future victim of the St. Bartholomew Massacre, is naturally portrayed as Neptune:

Je le peindray dessus une coche emailée  
De bleu, que trois dauphins à l'echine escaillée

Traineront sous le joug, & Glauque qui fera  
 Semblant de les brider, tant bien paint il sera:  
 Il tiendra dans la dextre un trident venerable,  
 Dedans la gauche main une hache effroiable:  
 Il regira de l'un les vagues de la mer,  
 Et de l'autre il fera semblant de faire armer  
 Noz escadrons François, soit pour donner bataille,  
 Soit pour gaigner d'assaut quelque forte muraille. . . .  
 (lines 121-30)

(I shall paint him standing on a blue-enamelled chariot, drawn by three yoked scaly-backed dolphins, with Glaucus who will appear to be holding their bridles, so skilfully will he be painted. In his right hand he will hold a venerable trident, in his left a terrifying axe. With one he will govern the waves of the sea, and with the other he will make as if to arm our French fleets, either to wage battle or to take by storm some mighty rampart. . . .)

His various victories are shown on the pillar which supports the statue, perhaps in the manner of Trajan's column. Finally, François de Coligny will also be shown:

. . . mais une nue obscure  
 Couvrira tout le haut de son armet cresté,  
 Pour le signe fatal de sa captivité.  
 (lines 174-76)

(. . . but a dark cloud will obscure the top of his crested helmet, as a fateful sign of his captivity.)

He had been captured at the siege of Parma in 1551.<sup>25</sup>

Ronsard presents here the design for a whole temple, dedicated to four euhemeristic divinities who are "Comme Hercule jadis, qui, pour suyvre en tout lieu / L'honneur et la vertu, d'homme se fait un Dieu" ("like Hercules of old who, because everywhere he followed honor and virtue, transformed himself from a man into a god," lines 215-16). What might have been an excessively sycophantic poem if

<sup>25</sup> See L. VIII. 81. n. 2 for details about his career.

confined to the eulogistic mode is rendered palatable by transforming the metaphors (Gaspard de Coligny is a Neptune) into visual images (the statue of Neptune bears the Admiral's features). Although the symbolism is fairly conventional, Ronsard spares the reader too much brain searching by explaining any of the less obvious attributes. The poem is saved by a strong element of playful irony: the main reason that Ronsard is worshipping in his imaginary temple is to honor Anne de Montmorency (lines 229–34):

... car c'est luy qui ma teste  
 Veut sauver de la dent de ceste fiere beste  
 Que Styx contre le Ciel âprement irrité  
 Conçoit, & la nomma l'horrible Pauvreté.  
 Dieux! faites que jamais, jamais je ne rencontre  
 Aupres de ma maison cest effroiable monstre!

(... for it is he who wishes to save my life from the fangs of that wild beast which Styx conceived in bitter anger against heaven and called horrific Poverty. Gods, grant that I never ever meet this dreadful monster around my home.)

Nevertheless, Ronsard is concerned to show that he is able to immortalize his patrons, and that his works will outlive mere physical monuments:

Ainsi, mon Mécenas, dans ce Temple de gloire  
 Je mettray ces portraictz, sacrez à la Memoire,  
 A fin que des longs ans les cours s'entresuyvants  
 Ne foulent point à bas leurs honneurs survivans,  
 Et que des CHASTILLONS la maison estimée  
 Vive, maugré le temps, par longue renommée,  
 Pour avoir tant aymé les nombreuses douceurs  
 Dont Phœbus Apollon anime les neuf sœurs.  
 Et moy, leur grand Poëte, au saint jour de leur feste,  
 Ayant de verd laurier toute enceinte la teste,  
 Planté sur un genouil aux marches de l'autel,  
 Je feray resonner leur renom immortel  
 Aux nerfz les mieux parlans de ma cythare courbe:  
 Ensemble de la voix je prescheray la tourbe,  
 Epandue à-l'entour, d'ensuyvre la Vertu,  
 Et que par autre point les CHASTILLONS n'ont eu



Tiltres d'honneurs divins, que pour avoir suyvie  
 L'honorable Vertu, tout le temps de leur vie,  
 Comme Hercule jadis, qui, pour suyvre en tout lieu  
 L'honneur et la vertu, d'homme se fait un Dieu.

(L. VIII. 82–83. 197–216)

(Thus, my patron, I shall place in this temple of glory these portraits, dedicated to Mnemosyne, so that the succeeding processions of long years should not trample down their enduring honors and that the famed house of Châtillon should live, in spite of time, through long renown, because it loved so much the countless delights with which Phoebus Apollo gives life to the nine sisters. And I, their great poet, on their holy feast day, having encircled my head all around with green laurel, kneeling on one knee at the steps of the altar, shall make their immortal glory re-echo on the most eloquent strings of my curved lute; with voice accompaniment, I shall exhort the masses, spread all around, to pursue Virtue, showing that the Châtillons have not received titles of divine honors for any other reason than that they followed honorable Virtue throughout their lives, like Hercules of old who, because everywhere he followed honor and virtue, transformed himself from a man into a god.)

Ronsard stresses here not only the virtue of the Châtillon family (which to a large extent derives from the honor they accord to Apollo and the Muses), but also the sacred role of the poet (lines 205–8). In protecting Ronsard from poverty, they are fulfilling a sacred duty.

The tone of the *Hymne de la Mort* is altogether more serious, in line with its subject, which concerns translunar rather than sublunar immortality; recent commentators such as Demerson, Céard, Ménager, and Quainton are right to play down earlier opinions about the hymn's being merely a collection of commonplaces on the subject of death.<sup>26</sup> As with the other hymns in the collection and in subse-

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<sup>26</sup> See Guy Demerson's discussion in *La Mythologie classique*, 437–41; Jean Céard, *La Nature et les prodiges: l'insolite au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle en France*, THR 158 (Geneva: Droz, 1977), 203–4; Ménager, *Ronsard: le roi, le poète et les hommes*, 85–88; and Malcolm Quainton, *Ronsard's Ordered Chaos: Visions of Flux and Stability in the Poetry of Pierre de Ronsard* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), 132–36.

quent collections, the ideas represent a coherent outlook and are inspired by a form of Christianized Platonism such as that advocated by Ficino. Plato's *Phaedo* and the *Timaeus* underlie much of the philosophy of the hymn.

We shall discuss at greater length in the next chapter Ronsard's ideas about Eternity and Time, the realms of Being and Becoming, and their Platonic sources. Briefly, as Daniel Ménager points out in connection with the *Hymne de la Mort*, the universe is subject to change and inconstancy while God alone is exempt from toil:

Mais le Soleil, la Lune, & les Astres des Cieux  
Font avecque travail leur tour laborieux:  
La Mer avec travail deux fois le jour chemine,  
La Terre, tout ainsi qu'une femme en gesine  
Qui avecques douleur met au jour ses enfans,  
Ses fruitz avec travail nous produict tous les ans:  
Ainsi DIEU l'a voulu, à fin que seul il vive  
Affranchy du labeur qui la race chetive  
Des humains va rongean de soucis langoureux.

(L. VIII. 165. 61-69)

(But the sun, the moon, and the stars of the heavens toil to complete their laborious revolutions; the sea toils to ebb and flow twice a day, the earth, like a woman in labor painfully giving birth to her children, toils to produce for us her fruits every year; God willed it thus, so that He alone might live freed from the labor which devours the wretched race of humans with languishing cares.)

Death is desirable because it frees man's soul from toil and unites it with God. To illustrate this, Ronsard uses a number of topoi associated with death, some of which are inspired by Plato's *Phaedo*.

The opening idea in this encomium of death liberating man from his bodily prison is most certainly a Platonic commonplace, and to make it more vivid, Ronsard uses an image which recalls Plato's *Cavern* myth in book 7 of the *Republic*, and also, perhaps, Socrates' comments in the *Phaedo* (9-10) on being released from his chains:

Ainsi qu'un prisonner qui jour & nuit endure  
Les manicles aux mains, aux piedz la chaine dure,  
Se doit bien resjouir à l'heure qu'il se voit

Delivré de prison: ainsi l'homme se doit  
 Resjouir grandement, quand la MORT luy delye  
 Le lien qui tenoit sa miserable vie,  
 Pour vivre en liberté. . .

(lines 51-57)

(Just as a prisoner who day and night endures manacles on his hands and hard chains on his feet must certainly rejoice when he is freed from prison, so must man greatly rejoice when Death undoes the bond which held his wretched life so that he may live in freedom. . .)

The Cavern myth stresses the imperfect knowledge such a prisoner has of the cave and the world outside, while Socrates' release from his chains leads him to speak of the inextricable unity of pleasure and pain, "since I suffered pain in my leg before from the chains, but now pleasure seems to have succeeded" (*Phaedo* 10). Death, then, delivers man from "Le lien qui tenoit sa miserable vie," which is pleasurable in itself, and leads to enlightenment.

The theme of the instability and ephemeral nature of the sublunar world is developed in lines 207-20:

S'il y avoit au monde un estat de durée,  
 Si quelque chose estoit en la terre asseurée,  
 Ce seroit un plaisir de vivre longuement:  
 Mais puis qu'on n'y voit rien qui ordinairement  
 Ne se change, & rechange, & d'inconstance abonde,  
 Ce n'est pas grand plaisir que de vivre en ce monde:  
 Nous le congnoissons bien, qui tousjours lamentons  
 Et pleurons aussi tost que du ventre sortons,  
 Comme presagians par naturel augure  
 De ce logis mondain la misere future:  
 Non pour autre raison les Thraces gémissoient,  
 Pleurant piteusement quand les enfans naissoient,  
 Et quand la MORT mettoit quelcun d'eux en biere,  
 L'estimoient bien-heureux, comme franc de misere.

(If there were in the world a state of permanence, if anything were assured in the world, it would be a pleasure to live for a long time; but since we usually see nothing which does not change, and change again, and abound in inconstancy, it is not



a great pleasure to live in this world. We know this well, who always lament and weep as soon as we come out of the womb, as if foreseeing through natural divination the future woes of this worldly dwelling. For no other reason did the Thracians grieve, weeping pitifully when children were born, and when Death put one of them in the coffin, they judged him blessed, for being free from misery.)

Ronsard would have found all of these themes in Neo-Platonic writers. For example, Ficino, in his lengthy treatise *De animorum immortalitate*, cites Proclus' commentary on the *Timaeus* concerning the disquiet felt by mortals:<sup>27</sup>

Auget turbationem eius, ut disputat Proculus in Timaeo, quod ab unitate in multitudinem dissonantem, a statu in mutationem omnis ferme quietis expertem delabitur, unde distrahitur semper et quasi affecta vertigine titubat et vacillat.

(book 16, chapter 7)

(What increases [the soul's] disturbance, as Proclus argues in his commentary on the *Timaeus*, is that it falls from unity into a disharmonious multiplicity, from immobility into movement which is virtually without rest, so that it is always drawn in different directions and, as if made dizzy, it staggers and reels.)

However, we are divine in as much as "privati ad tempus habitatione patriaeque caelesti . . . sollicitamur continue . . . caelestis patriae desiderio" ("deprived temporarily of our dwelling and heavenly homeland, we are continually tortured by a longing for our heavenly homeland"). This last idea is illustrated by Ronsard in lines 129–36 in a fine example of syncretism. At the beginning of the next chapter, Ficino introduces the idea present in lines 214–16:

Mitto quod non omnes morientes lugent, lugent autem nascentes omnes, et quasi inviti a lacrimis terrenum hoc iter auspicantur tanquam exilium.

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<sup>27</sup> See *Théologie platonicienne de l'immortalité des âmes*, ed. Raymond Marcel, 3 vols. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1964–70). References are given in the form of book and chapter number of the work, followed by volume and page number of the Marcel edition.



(I pass over the fact that not everyone laments when dying, whereas everyone laments on being born, and, as if unwillingly and in tears, enters into this earthly journey as if into exile.)

Death, therefore, is something to be desired, and Ronsard recounts a myth according to which God gave Death as a reward to mortals for denouncing Prometheus' theft of fire:

On dit que les humains avoient au premier âge  
Des Dieux reçu la vie en eternal partage,  
Et ne mouroient jamais, toutesfois plains d'ennuy  
Et de soucys vivoient, comme ilz font ajourd'hui:  
Leur langue à Jupiter accusa Prométhée  
De la flamme du feu qu'il luy avoit ostée,  
Et adonques ce Dieu pour les recompenser  
De tel accusation, ne peut jamais penser  
Plus grand don que la MORT, & leur en fit largesse  
Pour un divin present, comme d'une Deesse.

(lines 259–68)

(It is said that humans had received eternal life in the first age of the gods and never died, yet they lived filled with troubles and cares as they do today. Their tongues denounced Prometheus to Jupiter on account of the flame of fire which he had stolen from him, and then, to reward them for this denunciation, the god could think of no greater present than Death, and generously gave it to them as a divine gift, as if it were a goddess.)

After death, the soul is reunited with the Creator for all time. Here, Ronsard appears to part company with Plato, who believed in metempsychosis:

... ains de tout mal exempte  
De siecle en siecle vit bien heureuse & contente  
Aupres de son facteur, non plus se renfermant  
En quelque corps nouveau, ou bien se transformant  
En estoille, ou vagant par l'air dans les nûaiges,  
Ou voletant ça-bas dans les desers sauvages  
(Comme beaucoup ont creu), mais en toute saison  
Demourant dans le Ciel, son antique maison,

Pour contempler de DIEU l'éternelle puissance,  
 Les Daimons, les Herôs, & l'angelique Essence,  
 Les Astres, le Soleil, et le merveilleux tour  
 De la voute du Ciel qui nous cerne à-l'entour,  
 Se contentant de voir dessous elle les nuës,  
 La grand' Mer ondoyante, & les terres congües,  
 Sans plus y retourner, car à la verité  
 Bien peu se sentiroit de ta benignité  
 (O gratieuse MORT) si pour la fois seconde  
 Abandonnoit le Ciel, & revenoit au Monde.

(lines 291-308)

(... but freed from all pain it lives from century to century blessed and content beside its creator, no longer enclosing itself in some new body, or changing into a star, or wandering through the air in the clouds, or flitting around on earth in the savage wildernesses [as many people have thought] but dwelling for all time in heaven, its former home, to contemplate the eternal might of God, the Demons, Heroes, and angelic essence, the stars, the sun, and the wondrous revolution of the heavenly vault which surrounds us, being content to see beneath it the clouds, the great rippling sea, and the known lands, without returning there, for in truth, it would be scarcely overjoyed with your kindness, oh gracious Death, if for a second time it left heaven and returned to the world.)

However, Ficino puts forward the view in his work *De immortalitate animorum* that Plato was not necessarily asserting this doctrine himself. In book 17, chapters 3 and 4, he explains that the Greek philosopher may have written about the transmigration of souls, but that he meant this allegorically:

Nos ergo Xenocratis et Ammonii vestigia sequentes Platonem affirmavisse quaedam de anima non negamus, sed multa, quae de circuitu eius ab ipso tractantur, tamquam poetica, aliter intelligimus quam verba videantur significare. ...

(3. 166, 17. 4)

(We therefore, following in the footsteps of Xenocrates and Ammonius, do not deny that Plato made certain statements about the soul, but considering many of his discussions on the

circuit of the souls as poetic, we understand them otherwise than the literal sense seems to mean. . . .)

In other words, saying a soul is reborn in an animal or a hero merely means that it has become bestial or heroic.

Ronsard also, as in the *Hymne de l'Eternité*, mentions the regenerative qualities of Venus in the sublunar world, which alone prevent its destruction; see, for example, lines 315–18 and also 330–32:

Et ne fust de Venus l'âme generative,  
Qui tes fautes repare, & rend la forme vive,  
Le monde periroit: mais son germe en refait  
Autant de son costé, que ton dard en deffait.

.....

Ainsi, avec Venus la Nature trouva  
Moyen de r'animer par longs & divers changes,  
La matiere restant, tout cela que tu manges.

(And without the regenerative soul of Venus, which makes up for your offences and gives life to form, the world would perish; but her seed recreates as much on her side as your arrow destroys. . . . Thus, with Venus, Nature found a way to restore to life through long and various transformations everything that you devour, while matter remains.)

Complementing these Neo-Platonic concepts, Christian ideas on death are included, with a number of biblical quotations. Ronsard is probably alluding to Job 14. 1–2 in lines 142–48:

Homo natus de muliere, brevi vivens tempore, repletur multis  
miseriis. Qui quasi flos egreditur et conteritur, et fugit velut  
umbra, et numquam in eodem statu permanet.

1 Corinthians 15 ("Ubi est, mors, victoria tua? ubi est, mors, stimulus tuus?") is certainly cited by Ronsard in lines 193–94: "Et que nostre grant Maistre, en la Croix estendu / Et mourant, de la MORT l'aiguillon a perdu" ("And that our great Master, stretched out and dying on the cross, destroyed the sting of Death"); and also Matthew 11. 30 ("Iugum enim meum suave est, et onus meum leve") in lines 205–6: "Car son joug est plaisant, gracieux & léger, / Qui le dôs nous soulaige en lieu de le charger" ("For his yoke is sweet, pleasant, and

light, taking the weight off our backs instead of burdening them"). Lines 255–58 also contain biblical references to Philippians 1. 23: "desiderium habens dissolvi, et esse cum Christo, multo magis melius," and to 1 Corinthians 15. 20: "Nunc autem Christus resurrexit a mortuis primitiae dormientium." There is also an allusion to Ecclesiastes 1. 9 ("Nihil sub sole novum") in line 326, "Et rien dessous le Ciel ne se void de nouveau" ("And nothing new is to be seen under the sky"). As Screech has pointed out in relation to Montaigne, "treating the philosophical attraction of death (which has, oddly, struck generations of readers as somehow anti-Christian or un-Christian) he is as close as possible to informed theological opinion within his Church in his day."<sup>28</sup> As so often in the sixteenth century, Neo-Platonism and Christianity are presented in this poem as being entirely consonant, and just as he emphasized syncretism in the *Hymne de la Justice*, Ronsard does the same with regard to death.

His comments on the common lot that awaits all men have, of course, a lengthy tradition, but his choice of examples to illustrate this is interesting:

Si les hommes pensoient à-part-eux quelque fois  
 Qu'il nous faut tous mourir, & que mesme les Roys  
 Ne peuvent eviter de la MORT la puissance,  
 Ilz prendroient en leurs cœurs un peu de patience:  
 Sommes nous plus divins qu'Achille ny qu'Ajax,  
 Qu'Alexandre, ou Cesar, qui ne se sçeuvent pas  
 Defendre de la MORT, bien qu'ilz eussent en guerre  
 Reduite souz leurs mains presque toute la terre?

(lines 89–96)

(If men thought to themselves sometimes that we must all die, and that even kings cannot avoid the power of Death, they would have a little patience in their hearts. Are we more divine than Achilles or Ajax, Alexander or Caesar, who were unable to protect themselves from Death, even though they had brought almost the entire earth beneath their power in war?)

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<sup>28</sup> "Montaigne: Some Classical Notions in their Context," in *Montaigne in Cambridge: Proceedings of the Cambridge Montaigne Colloquium, 7–9 April 1988*, ed. Philip Ford and Gillian Jondorf (Cambridge: Cambridge French Colloquia, 1989), 45–46.



All are great warriors. The coupling of this hymn with *Le Temple* would serve to underline the tenuous nature of military fame.

The *Hymne de la Mort* is a fine example of Ronsard's philosophical poetry. It is persuasive and coherent, and its numerous images all add to the richness of its texture, all the more so in that, like the ideas expressed, they may recall many contexts, both Christian and pagan. The poem also contains some striking and emotive descriptions: the portrayal of Death (lines 269–79) discussed in chapter 3; the beautiful Homeric image of the generations of man resembling leaves falling from a tree (lines 147–49); the vision of the soul, reunited with God and serenely contemplating the world beneath it (lines 297–305).

Both the *Hymne de la Philosophie* (L. VIII. 85–102) and the *Hymne des Astres* (L. VIII. 150–61) are likewise strongly influenced by Neo-Platonism, and while our last pair of hymns concerned sublunar and translunar immortality, this pair deals with sublunar and translunar knowledge and the influence of the translunar on the sublunar world.

After the opening twenty-line dedication to Odet de Coligny, Ronsard speaks of Philosophy's ability to allow mortal man's imprisoned soul to catch glimpses of the nature of the universe:

Elle, voyant qu'à l'homme estoit nyé  
D'aller au Ciel, disposte, a delié  
Loing, hors du corps, nostre Ame emprisonnée,  
Et par esprit aux astres l'a menée,  
Car en dressant de nostre Ame les yeux,  
Haute, s'attache aux merveilles des Cieux,  
Vaguant par tout, & sans estre lassée  
Tout l'Univers discourt en sa pensée,  
Et seulle peut des astres s'alier  
Osant de DIEU la nature espier.

(lines 21–30)

(When she saw that the path to heaven was denied man, she readily freed our imprisoned soul from its body and led it in spirit to the stars, for in raising up the eyes of our souls, on high, it becomes fastened on to the wonders of the heavens, wandering everywhere, and without becoming tired it discovers the entire Universe in its thoughts, and is alone able to unite with the stars, daring to observe the nature of God.)

He then goes on in lines 31–184 to catalogue the various spheres of knowledge which Philosophy opens up to man: metaphysics and demonology (lines 31–54); astronomy and meteorology (lines 55–106); the Underworld (lines 107–25); navigation and oceanography (lines 126–250); geography and cosmography (lines 151–66); jurisprudence (lines 167–76); and the nature of various human professions (lines 178–84).

Germaine Lafeuille points out in her study of this hymn that Ronsard is using the traditional Aristotelian order of things: “divine, astral, sublunar.”<sup>29</sup> It also corresponds to the Platonic division: cosmic mind, cosmic soul, realm of nature. And if, as she also points out, Ronsard’s Philosophy tells us remarkably little about the highest order of things—God and the angels—it is precisely because we are dealing with the imperfect knowledge which man can acquire through the temporary release of soul from body this side of death.

We have already seen in *Les Daimons* Ronsard’s ideas about the hierarchy of immortals: the divine, the angelic, the demonic, and the heroic; and we have seen that these ideas were elaborated by Proclus. In the *Hymne de la Philosophie* too, he emphasizes the role of intermediary played by the demons, speaking of:

... comme DIEU, par eux nous admonneste,  
Et comme promptz ilz portent la requeste  
De l’homme au Ciel, eux habitans le lieu  
De l’air, qui est des hommes & de DIEU  
Egal-distant. . . . (lines 35–39)

(... how God warns us through them and how they readily bear man’s requests to heaven, since they inhabit the region of the air, equidistant between men and God. . . .)

This hierarchy also allows men some knowledge of the divine, thanks to a “chain” which links God with the sublunar world. Commenting on this Homeric notion (see *Iliad* 8. 15–28), Ronsard writes:

Donc, à bon droit cette PHILOSOPHIE  
D’un Jupiter les menaces defie,  
Qui, plein d’orgueil, se vante que les Dieux

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<sup>29</sup> *Cinq hymnes de Ronsard*, p. 69.

Ne le sçauroient à bas tirer des Cieux,  
 Tirassent ilz d'une main conjurée  
 Le bout pendant de la cheine ferrée,  
 Et que luy seul, quand bon luy semblera,  
 Tous de sa chaîne au Ciel les tirera.  
 Mais les efforts d'une telle science  
 Tire les Dieux, & la mesme puissance  
 De Jupiter, & comme tous charmez  
 Dedans du bois les detient enfermez.

(lines 67–78)

(So it is right that Philosophy challenges the threats of a Jupiter who, filled with pride, boasts that the gods could not pull him down from the heavens, even were they to conspire to pull the dangling end of the iron chain, and that he alone, when he thinks fit, will pull them all to heaven with his chain. But the efforts of such learning draw the gods, and the very power of Jupiter, and keep them enclosed as if all enchanted in wood.)

Ficino's comments on the golden chain myth are illuminating in this respect:

Prima lux in Deo est, atque ibi est talis ut superemineat intellectum, ideoque non potest lux intelligibilis appellari. Sed lux illa Dei, cum infunditur angelo, fit e vestigio lux intellectualis atque intelligi potest. Quando infunditur animae, fit rationalis ac potest non intelligi solum, sed [etiam] cogitari. Inde migrat in animae idolum,<sup>30</sup> ubi fit sensitiva, nondum tamen corporea. Inde in aethereum vehiculum idoli, ubi fit corporalis, nondum tamen manifeste sensibilis. Denique in corpus elementale, sive simplex aereumque, sive compositum, quod est aetheri vasculum, in quo evadit manifeste visibilis. Atque ego hanc esse puto catenam illam auream quam vidit Homerus a caelo pendentem et in terras usque demissam, qua apprehensa homines sese possint in caelos attollere.

(*De immortalitate animorum* 13. 4, 2. 239)

<sup>30</sup> "Idolum" is defined by Ficino as "simulacrum rationalis animae" ("the image of the rational soul"). See *De immortalitate animorum*, 13. 2, 2. 207.

(The first light is in God, and there it is such that it passes understanding, and so cannot be called intelligible light. But when that light of God is poured into the angel, it instantly becomes intellectual light and can be understood. When it is poured into the soul, it becomes rational and can be not only understood but also pondered upon. Then it passes into the idol of the soul, where it becomes perceptible by the senses, but not yet corporeal. Then it passes into the ethereal vehicle of the idol, where it becomes corporeal, but not yet clearly sensible. Finally it passes into the elemental body, either simple and composed of air, or compound, a vessel for the ethereal idol, in which it becomes clearly visible. And I think this is the golden chain which Homer saw hanging from heaven and going right down to the earth, which, when men have seized it, enables them to be raised up to heaven.)

The efforts of Philosophy, then, may enable men to ascend this chain in order to reach a closer understanding of worldly and otherworldly knowledge. God alone passes understanding, and for this reason, mortals can only dare "de DIEU la nature espier."

When Philosophy has finished revealing to men "Ce qu'ilz pouvoient, sans estre Dieux, comprendre" ("what they could understand without being gods," line 188), she takes up residence on a lofty crag, which gives Ronsard a perfect opportunity to introduce a lengthy hypotyposis:

Dans une plaine, est une haute Roche.  
 D'où, nul vivant, sans grand travail, n'approche:  
 Car le sentier en est facheux, & droit,  
 Dur, rabboteux, espineux, & estroit,  
 Tout à-l'entour s'y asproye l'hortye, 195  
 Et le chardon, & la ronce sortye  
 D'entre les rocz, & les halliers mordans,  
 Qui font seigner les mains des abordans.  
 Au bas du Roc est un creux precipice  
 Qui faict horreur à l'homme plain de vice 200  
 Qui veut monter avant qu'estre purgé  
 De son peché, dont il estoit chargé.  
 Tout au plus haut, cette Roche deserte  
 Est d'amaranthe, & de roses couverte,



D'œilletz, de lyz, & tousjours les ruisseaux 205  
 Herbes & fleurs animent de leurs eaux.  
 Jamais l'orage & la fiere tempeste,  
 En s'esclattant, ne luy noircist la teste,  
 Mais le Soleil gracieux en tout temps  
 Y faict germer les boutons du Printemps. 210

Là, sur le Roc cette PHILOSOPHIE  
 Pour tout jamais son palais edifie  
 A murs d'erain, loing des ennuiz mondains,  
 Et des souciz, dont les hommes sont plains,  
 Qui, comme porcz, vivent dedans la fange, 215  
 Peu curieux d'immortelle loüenge.

Là, font la garde au tour de sa maison  
 Ainsi qu'archers, Jugement, & Raison,  
 Et la Suëur, qui se tient à la porte,  
 Et dans ses mains une couronne porte 220  
 De verd Laurier, pour le digne loyer  
 De qui se veut aux Vertuz emploïer.  
 Là, sans repos, la Verité travaille.  
 Et, bien-armée à toute heure bataille  
 Contre Ignorance, & contre Vanité, 225  
 Contre Paresse, & contre Volupté  
 Pour leur defendre obstinément l'approche  
 Et le moyen de monter sur la Roche.

Au bas du Roc, un long peuple se suit  
 Comme les flotz enroüez d'un grand bruit, 230  
 Qui de la main font signe, & de la teste  
 Vouloir monter dispostement au feste  
 Du roc facheux, & bien semble à les voir  
 Que de monter ilz feront leur devoir.  
 Les uns ne sont qu'acheminez à-peine, 235  
 Les autres sont au meillieu de la plaine,  
 Les uns desja sont au pied du rocher,  
 Les autres sont ja voisins d'approcher  
 Du haut sommet: mais quand leur main est preste  
 De la toucher, une horrible tempeste 240  
 D'Ambicions, d'Envie, & de Plaisirs,  
 De Voluptez, & de mondains Desirs,  
 Les font broncher, d'une longue traverse

Cul par sus teste à bas, à la renverse  
 Dans un torrent: car, certes, il ne faut 245  
 » Penser gravir legerement en haut  
 » Où la Vertu en son Temple repose,  
 » Sans decharger son cœur de toute chose  
 » Qui soit mondaine: ainsi que tu as faict,  
 » Divin PRELAT, qui t'es rendu parfaict 250  
 Pour estre mys au plus haut de son Temple,  
 D'où, maintenant, assuré tu contemple'  
 D'un œil constant les longues passions  
 Du mauvais peuple, & les conditions  
 De son estat: car bien qu'il soit en vie, 255  
 Il souffre autant icy de tyrannie  
 Que font là bas de peine & de tourment  
 Les Mortz punis du cruel Rhadamant'.

(lines 191-258)

(In a plain is a lofty crag, which no living person can approach without great effort, for the path to it is troublesome, and straight, difficult, rugged, thorny, and narrow, and all around there bristle nettles, thistles, and brambles emerging from the rocks, and sharp thickets which make the hands of those who approach bleed. At the foot of the rock is a deep precipice which terrifies vice-ridden man who wishes to ascend before being purified of his sin, which loaded him down. At the very top, this deserted crag is covered with amaranth and roses, carnations, and lilies, and streams continually feed herbs and flowers with their waters. Storm and fierce tempest never darken its summit when they burst, but the gentle sun at all times causes the buds of Spring to burgeon. There on the crag Philosophy erects her bronze-walled palace for all eternity, far from the worldly woes and cares which fill men who, like swine, live in the mire, uninterested in immortal praise. There mount guard around her house like archers Judgment and Reason and Sweat, standing at the gate, bearing in her hands a green laurel wreath as the worthy reward of those who wish to devote themselves to the Virtues. There Truth works without respite and, well-armed, continually battles against Ignorance and Vanity, Sloth and Lust, stubbornly to prevent their

approach and access up the crag. At the foot of the rock there comes a long procession of people, like the hoarse waves of a mighty roar, indicating with their hands and their heads that they wish to ascend nimbly to the summit of the rugged crag, and to look at them, it clearly appears that they will do their duty in ascending. Some have hardly got under way, others are in the middle of the plain, others are already at the foot of the crag, others are already close to reaching the lofty summit. But when their hand is about to touch it, a terrible storm of Ambitions, Envy, Pleasures, Lusts, and worldly Desires causes them to tumble in a long fall, head over heels, backwards into a torrent: for, certainly, one must not think lightly of climbing up to where Virtue rests in her temple without emptying one's heart of all worldly things, as you have done, divine prelate, who have made yourself perfect to be placed at the very summit of her temple from where, now, you view in safety with unswerving gaze the long-lived passions of the evil mob and the conditions of its estate: for although they are alive, they suffer as much from tyranny here as the Dead punished by cruel Rhadamanthes do from pain and torment.)

We have already examined above (chapter 3) examples of hypotyposis in which allegorical figures are set in elaborate landscapes. The presentation of Philosophy, seen as identical to Virtue, is in line with Platonic and Neo-Platonic thought: for Plato, beauty, truth, and virtue are synonomous, and for Neo-Platonists such as Ficino, man only sins through ignorance, not evil.

The Hesiodic *locus classicus* for this description is brief:

The immortal gods have placed in front of Virtue sweat. The road to it is long and steep and rocky at first. But when the traveller reaches the summit, then it is easy, for all its previous difficulty.  
(*Works and Days*, 289–91)

The additional elements in Ronsard's description, apart from making his style more copious, underline the central message. Nettles, thistles, brambles, and thickets (lines 195–97) all make the ascent harder, and in addition to this very basic allegorical meaning, the plants, which frequently appear in allegorical paintings, may represent different kinds of impediment: thistles are traditional symbols of tribula-

tion and evil (see Genesis 3. 18 and Job 31. 40); nettles are frequently associated with lust (see Juvenal 2. 128 and Scève, *Délie* 161); brambles too represent evil (Luke 6. 43–5). The “creux precipice” (line 199) is perhaps the “bottomless pit” of Revelation 9. 1 and 2. The summit of the crag is covered with propitious plants: the “amaranthe,” so named because it does not fade away, thus symbolizing immortality; roses, in Christian terms a symbol of perfection, an alchemical symbol of wisdom, and representing rebirth in Greco-Roman culture; carnations, symbols of love; and lilies, which may signify reason as well as purity and immortality. Philosophy’s palace, with its bronze walls, denoting durability, is surrounded by allegorical figures: Jugement, Raison, and the Hesiodic Suëur, with a laurel wreath (victory and immortality). Verité wards off Ignorance, Vanité, Paresse, and Volupté.

Particularly striking is the description of the long procession of those who aspire to reach the summit of the crag. As well as its visual impact, it appeals to our sense of hearing (see especially line 230). We contemplate the picture of the endless procession of aspirants crossing the plain and ascending the mountain, with a kind of close-up of those at the top who are repelled by the allegorical storm “D’Ambicions, d’Envie, & de Plaisirs, / De Voluptez, & de mondains Desirs” (lines 241–42), and cast into a torrent. There is much that is reminiscent of Last Judgment scenes in this picture, such as the fifteenth-century fresco in the chapel of the château of Château-dun. It also recalls Plato’s vision of the souls of evil men in the myth of Er:

When we were close to the aperture, and were on the point of ascending . . . we suddenly came in sight of Ardiaeus and others, of whom the greater part, I think I must say, had been despots; though it is true that there were also a few private persons, who had once been reckoned among enormous criminals. These people, when they thought themselves sure of ascending immediately, were repulsed by the aperture, which bellowed whenever one of these incurable sinners, or anybody who had not fully expiated his offenses, attempted to ascend. Thereupon certain fierce and fiery-looking men, who were in attendance and understood the meaning of the sound, seized some of them by the waist and carried them off; but Ardiaeus



and others were bound, hand and foot and head, and thrown down, and flayed with scourges, and dragged out by the way-side, and carded, like wool, upon thorn-bushes; and those who were passing by at the time were informed why they were put to this torture, and that they were being carried away in order to be flung into Tartarus. (Republic 10. 615-16)

In contrast, Odet de Coligny is presented alone at the top of this Temple, serenely looking down upon the tormented souls of the "mauvais peuple," whose living Hell, in line with the traditional moral explanation of the famous sinners of the Underworld, is to be tortured by their own insane acquisitiveness or ambition. The parallels with Plato and the presence of the allegorical figures and plants indicate that this is an essentially didactic hypotyposis: there is a direct relationship between sign and meaning, and although the picture presented is a complex one, its interpretation is straightforward. As in *Le Temple* . . . , the visual compliment paid to Odet de Coligny is made more palatable than a purely verbal one would be. However, although the imagery is in the Aristotelian tradition, the message, as elsewhere in the 1555 collection of hymns, is a Platonic one.

After this hypotyposis, lines 273-322 consist of an encomium of Coligny for his virtue and wisdom. He possesses the Socratic quality of self-knowledge (line 291) which enables him to seek truth and, in another short hypotyposis borrowed from Lucretius, to look calmly and contentedly on the "mechant peuple" as they struggle to survive a shipwreck out at sea (compare lines 312-18 with the opening of book 2 of *De rerum natura*).

Coligny, then, is an exception to the normal run of things, and this points to the limited ability of Philosophy to bring enlightenment to the sublunar world. The perspective is quite different in the *Hymne des Astres*, where it is the stars' power and influence on sublunar affairs which is to the fore.

Nevertheless, the importance of releasing the soul from the body to enable it to attain some form of knowledge is reiterated, and, in the context of this hymn, it is explained that the stars have no dominance over our souls:

Les Estoilles adonc seules se firent dames  
 Sur tous les corps humains, & non dessus les ames,  
 Prenant l'Occasion à leur service, à fin

D'executer çà-bas l'arrest de leur destin. (lines 97-100)

(The stars then alone gained power over all human bodies, and not over souls, bringing Opportunity into their service in order to carry out on earth the decrees of their destiny.)

Unlike the *Hymne de la Philosophie*, the *Hymne des Astres* begins on a triumphant, personal note, presenting the poet freed from the limitations of the sublunar world and contemplating the whole of the firmament:

C'est trop long temps, Mellin, demeuré sur la terre  
 Dans l'humaine prison, qui l'Esprit nous enserre,  
 Le tenant engourdy d'un sommeil ocieux  
 Il faut le delier, & l'envoyer aux cieux:  
 Il me plaist en vivant de voir souz moy les nües,  
 Et presser de mes pas les espauls chenües  
 D'Atlas le porte-ciel, il me plaist de courir  
 Jusques au Firmament, & les secretz ouvrir  
 (S'il m'est ainsi permis) des Astres admirables,  
 Et chanter leurs regardz de noz destins coupables.

(lines 1-10)

(Mellin, we have dwelt too long on earth in our mortal prison which encloses our spirits, keeping them languishing in idle sleep; we must free them and send them heavenwards. I wish while still alive to see the clouds beneath me and tread upon the hoary shoulders of sky-bearing Atlas. I wish to run as far as the firmament and open up the secrets [if I am allowed to] of the wondrous stars, and sing of their gaze which is responsible for our fates.)

Later on in the poem, Ronsard includes the profession of poet amongst the "métiers bien meilleurs": philosophers, prophets, and seers.

The influence of the stars on the sublunar world is extensive, and their agent is Occasion (see lines 99-100 already cited above). They determine individuals' destinies, the cycle of the seasons, the weather, and may be consulted to foresee future momentous events. In order to explain this dominance, Ronsard includes in the hymn a myth relating to the battle of the gods and giants (lines 19-96).

Originally, the stars were free to wander around at night like sheep, but were herded together by the Sun's doorkeepers, the Horae, when he rose in the east, and kept in a stable until the rising of the Moon (lines 19–38).<sup>31</sup> However, when the Giants attempt to dethrone the Olympian gods, Ursa, the pole star, calls together the other stars and warns Jupiter (lines 39–68). They then dazzle the attackers with their brightness, in order to enable Jupiter to defeat them. As a reward, the stars are then fixed in their places by Jupiter, and given dominion over the world (lines 69–96).

This aetiological fable explaining why the fixed stars remain in their position has a clear Platonic inspiration. As part of the Cosmic Soul, they move with a self-induced motion, and control the movement of the sublunar world. Plato had written in the *Timaeus* of these stars:

And he assigned to each two motions: one uniform in the same place, as each always thinks the same thoughts about the same things; the other a forward motion, as each is subjected to the revolution of the Same and uniform. But in respect of the other five motions he made each motionless and still, in order that each might be as perfect as possible.

(*Timaeus* 40A–B, trans. Cornford)

The image of the blacksmith fixing nails around a wheel recalls the traditional Neo-Platonic idea of the demiurge (Hephaestus) as blacksmith:<sup>32</sup>

D'un lien aimantin leurs plantes attache,  
Et comme de grans cloux dans le Ciel les ficha,  
Ainsi qu'un mareschal qui hors de la fournaise  
Tire des cloux ardans, tous rayonnez de braise,  
Qu'à grandz coups de marteaux il congne durement  
A-lentour d'une rouë arengez proprement.

(lines 83–88)

<sup>31</sup> Du Bellay's beautiful sonnet *Deja la nuit en son parc amassoit . . .*, *L'Olive* 83, ed. Chamard 1. 97, presents the stars being rounded up by Night: "Un grand troupeau d'étoiles vagabondes."

<sup>32</sup> Cf. the Homeric description of the shield of Agamemnon alluded to above, chap. 3, where the bosses are seen as representing the stars.



(He attached their feet with an adamantine chain and fixed them like great nails in the sky, just like a blacksmith who pulls red-hot nails out of the furnace, all shining with embers, which, arranged carefully around a wheel, he hammers hard with great blows.)

In lines 109–88, Ronsard considers the influence of the stars on people's professions. Although he does not specifically allot these activities to individual stars or signs of the zodiac, he clearly has in mind astrological works, and perhaps in particular Manilius' *Astronomica* or Firmicus Maternus' *Matheseos libri VIII* (which closely follows Manilius). While not keeping strictly to Manilius' pattern, omitting many signs of the zodiac, the conjunction of activities is telling. The little vignettes which he produces for each of the activities recall similar representations in the visual arts, for example Giulio Romano's sixteen medallions in the Sala dei Venti at the Palazzo Tè in Mantua.<sup>33</sup>

lines			cf. Manilius
109–11 (warriors, Patroclus)	ARIES	charioteers	5. 67–101
112–16 (navigators, Typhis)	ARIES	navigators	5. 32–56
117–20 (farmers)	VIRGO	farmers	5. 270–92
121–24 (wine-producer)	LEO	viticulturur	5. 234–50
125–32 (fishermen, divers)	CANCER	fisherman	5. 189–96
133–38 (hunters)	CANCER	hunters	5. 174–88
139–44 (miner, alchemist)	AQUARIUS	goldsmiths	5. 504–37
145–47 (weavers)	VIRGO	maidens' skills	5. 254–55
148–50 (artists, masons, merchants)	VIRGO	applied arts	5. 285–92
151–56 (philosophers and initiates)	SCORPIO	priests	5. 339–47
157–60 (bird-augurs)	SCORPIO	prophets	5. 347
161–66 (poets)	LIBRA	divine poets	5. 324–38
167–82 (warriors and generals)	AQUARIUS	looters & generals	5. 486–503

On the other hand, the general movement of lines 189–224 appears to have book 1 of Virgil's *Georgics* in mind. Virgil deals with the farmer's calendar through the various seasons in lines 204–350;

<sup>33</sup> These are discussed by E. H. Gombrich in *Symbolic Images*, in the chapter "The *Sala dei Venti* in the Palazzo del Tè," 109–18.



weather signs in lines 351–463, concentrating on the moon and the sun at the end of this section; and portents and omens at the end of the book. Ronsard follows this pattern in his much shorter section. The description of the stars ends, curiously, with a refutation of two theories: that they derive nourishment from inhaling the humors of the earth; and that they are mortal.

Dorat, probably following Porphyry, repeats this first idea in his commentary on *Odyssey* 12. 62–63 concerning the Symplegades:<sup>34</sup> “By this way even winged things may never pass, not even the cowering doves that bear ambrosia to Father Zeus.”

Zeus a calore dictus est et pro sole sumitur, ut testatur Plato in Phaedro, cui cibus est ambrosia, id est exhalatio et subtilior evaporatio qua sol et altera astra nutriuntur. Haec stoicorum et veterum opinio fuit. (Dorat MS., fol. 13<sup>v</sup>)

(Zeus is named after heat, and is taken for the sun, as Plato points out in the *Phaedrus*. His food is ambrosia, in other words the exhalations and thinner evaporations by which the sun and the other stars are nourished. This was the opinion of the Stoics and the ancients.)

In refuting the idea that the stars are mortal, Ronsard is able to finish his description with a contrast between their serenity and the unenviable state of sublunar men:

Tel soing ne vous tient pas, car apres noz naissances  
Que vous avez versé dedans nous voz puissances,  
Plus ne vous chaut de nous, ny de noz faictz aussi:  
Ains courez en repoz, delivrez de soucy,  
Et françz des passions, qui des le berceau suyvent  
Les hommes qui ça-bas chargez de peine vivent.  
(lines 245–50)

(You are not held by such care, for after our births, when you have infused us with your powers, you care no longer about us or our deeds. But you run on in peace, released from con-

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<sup>34</sup> See fol. 13<sup>v</sup> of the manuscript in the Ambrosian Library, Milan, and also my article “Ronsard and Homeric Allegory,” p. 54.

cern and free from the passions which, from the cradle, dog men who live on earth laden with pain.)

The theme of the contrasting condition of the sublunar and the translunar worlds is continued in our final pair of poems, the *Prière à la Fortune* (L. VIII. 103–14) and the *Hymne du Ciel* (L. VIII. 140–49). As was the case with the other poems in the first half of the collection, the emphasis in the *Prière à la Fortune* is on the sublunar world's natural state of discord, epitomized by its predilection for war:

Puisque noz Roys espointz de trop de gloire,  
 N'ont autre soing que par une victoire  
 De quelque ville, ou d'un chasteau conquis  
 Hausser leur bruit par sang d'hommes aquis,  
 Et puis qu'ilz ont de toute leur contrée  
 Pour cherir Mars, chassé la belle Astrée,  
 Et pour la Paix ont choisi le Discord,  
 Et pour la vie ilz ont choisy la mort  
 Dedans leurs cœurs, ayant bien peu de crainte  
 De JESUCHRIST, & de sa Loy tressainte,  
 Expressément qui defend aux humains  
 Du sang d'autrui ne se souiller les mains,  
 Ains vivre ensemble en paix & en concorde,  
 Loing de la guerre, & de toute discorde,  
 Et puis qu'ilz sont obstinez durement  
 Jusque à fuir tout admonnestement:  
 Si ne faut-il qu'en chascune Province  
 Le peuple laisse à prier pour son Prince,  
 Et pour ceux-là qui sont en dignité  
 Constituez sous leur auctorité:  
 Car un Roy seul ne sçauroit tout parfaire.

(lines 99–119)

(Since our kings, spurred on by an excess of pride, care only about elevating their own reputation gained at the expense of human blood through conquering some town or capturing a castle, and since they have chased beautiful Astraea from all their land in order to cherish Mars, and chosen Discord over Peace, and death over life within their hearts, holding in little awe Jesus Christ and his most holy Law, which expressly for-

bids humans to sully their hands with other men's blood, but orders them to live together in peace and harmony, far from war and all discord, and since they have stubbornly dug their heels in to the point of shunning all warning; still the people must not stop praying for their prince in each province and for those who are set up in rank beneath them; for a king on his own cannot accomplish everything.)

As in the other "sublunar" hymns, there is an ironic contrast throughout this poem: Ronsard condemns war as sacrilegious, only to go on to pray for victory in war for the French king.

It has been pointed out that, iconographically, Ronsard's depiction of Fortune shares many of the attributes of the different but related deity *Occasio* (cf. fig. 9), a force which is viewed by him as an agent of the stars influencing the mortal bodies of humans, but not their immortal souls. Even the stars are dependent upon God, who alone has control over human souls.<sup>35</sup> Panofsky, as we have seen in chapter 3, discusses this assimilation between the two allegorical personifications, which took place as early as the twelfth century, "this fusion being favored by the fact that the Latin word for 'Kairos', viz. *occasio*, is of the same gender as *fortuna*."<sup>36</sup>

The first portrayal of Fortune comes in lines 68–70:

... une aveugle Deesse  
Comme est Fortune, en qui ne fut, ny n'est  
Veüe en ses yeux, ny en ses piedz d'arrest.

(... a blind goddess like Fortune in whom there never was nor is sight in her eyes, or rest in her feet.)

Pictorially, Fortune is normally represented as having her eyes covered with a blindfold (cf. l. 294, "les deux yeux liez") and with a ball beneath her feet (cf. l. 293, "boule sous tes piedz"). Emphasizing her dominion over the world, Ronsard also represents her:

Qui de ton chef hurtes le haut du pole,  
Et de tes piedz la terre vas foulant

<sup>35</sup> See Quinton, *Ronsard's Ordered Chaos*, chap. 3, for a useful discussion of Ronsard's concept of Fortune and the relationship with God.

<sup>36</sup> *Studies in Iconology*, 72.

Dessus un globe incessamment roulant. . .

(lines 80–82)

(Touching the topmost pole with your head and trampling the earth with your feet upon a ceaselessly rolling sphere. . .)

which, as Malcolm Quainton points out, recalls Dürer's engraving of Nemesis.<sup>37</sup> Fortune also has the forelock traditionally associated with Occasio, as in line 141: "Car c'est ce Roy qui te tenoit au crin. . . ." The final description of Fortune, which presents all the attributes which she will lose if she answers the poet's prayer, has already been discussed above (chap. 3). However, in the context of the poem, this eventuality is presented as virtually impossible: Fortune would no longer be Fortune without these attributes.

In the central prayer to Fortune, too, and especially lines 155–280, there is more than a hint of pessimism. François de Guise is likened to Achilles (lines 155–60), whose fate was to have an illustrious but short life. Anne de Montmorency is a second Hector. In a passage which recalls some of the themes of the *Hymne de la Mort*, Ronsard gloomily speculates on the Constable's early death:

Car celuy seul en hauteur les surpasse  
D'autant qu'un mont une campagne basse:  
Mais tout ainsi que le tonnerre assaut  
Plus volontiers quelque sapin bien haut  
Qu'un petit fresne, ainsi la mort assomme  
Plus tost un grand, que quelque petit homme.

(lines 179–84)

(For he alone surpasses them in stature as a mountain does the low-lying countryside. But just as the thunderbolt more readily attacks some lofty fir tree than a little ash, so death strikes a great man sooner than a little one.)

He also goes on to consider the grief this would occasion in France:

Garde le donc, nous aurions plus d'ennuy,  
Et plus de dueil pour la perte de luy  
Que les Troyens assiegez n'en reçurent

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<sup>37</sup> Ronsard's *Ordered Chaos*, 67–68.



Quand de leurs murs Hector ils aperceurent  
 Qui sanglotoit (estendu sur le bord  
 De Simoïs) aux longz traictz de la mort,  
 Estant navré par la lance d'Achille:  
 Un pleur se fist neuf jours parmy la Ville,  
 Où, sans cesser, de tous coustez sonnoient  
 Les coups de poing que ses gens se donnoient  
 Sur la poitrine, accablez de tristesse,  
 Pour le trepas d'Hector, leur forteresse,  
 Qui conseilloit, & des mains achevoit  
 Tout ce que dict au conseil il avoit,  
 Ayant autant au combat de vaillance,  
 Comme au conseil il avoit de prudence.

(lines 185–200)

(Guard him then; we would be more troubled and grief-stricken at his loss than the besieged Trojans when from their walls they perceived Hector sobbing, stretched out on the banks of the Simois, at the long arrows of death, being wounded by Achilles' spear; for nine days there was wailing in the city where, without respite, on all sides there rang out the beating of breasts of its people, overwhelmed with sadness at the death of Hector, their rampart, who advised and carried out with his hands everything he had spoken at the council, having as much valor in battle as he had wisdom in counsel.)

Similarly, Gaspard de Coligny is a second Ajax, another ill-omened hero, who ended up becoming insane and taking his own life after shaming himself when he failed to beat Odysseus for Achilles' armor. Actual rather than potential gloom is already present in the life of another of the Coligny brothers, François d'Andelot, who, as we saw in the *Temple* ..., was a prisoner of the Spanish at this time.<sup>38</sup>

All of these themes underline the impossibility of lasting good fortune in the sublunar world and reaffirm the traditional role and, therefore, the traditional iconographical presentation of Fortune. The contrast with the *Hymne du Ciel* could hardly be greater, for here,

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<sup>38</sup> See my discussion of the hymn in this chapter.

we are dealing with a serene and perfect world, far above the cares that haunt mankind on earth:

L'Esprit de l'ÉTERNEL qui avance ta course,  
 Espandu dedans toy, comme une grande source  
 De tous costez t'anime, & donne mouvement,  
 Te faisant tourner en sphere rondement,  
 Pour estre plus parfaict, car en la forme ronde  
 Gist la perfection qui toute en soy abonde.

(lines 29–34)

(The spirit of the everlasting God which advances your course, perfused within you, like a great spring of water, gives you life on all sides and movement, causing you to spin round in a sphere in order to be more perfect, for in roundness resides perfection, which abounds entirely within itself.)

Laumonier and scholars after him have quite correctly pointed to the *Hymnus Coelo* of Marullus as a source for this hymn. However, the Latin poem itself has a clear model in the *Orphic Hymns* (4, the "Ὑμνος Οὐρανοῦ"), and Ronsard's composition is in fact a *contaminatio* of these two poems. The text of the Orphic hymn is as follows:

Uranus, father of all things, ever-enduring part of the universe, first-born, the beginning of all things and of all things the end, elegant (κόσμος) father, whirling like a sphere around the earth, dwelling of the blessed gods, travelling with the whirling motion of a spinning top, heavenly and earthly one, comprehending and guarding all things, holding the unchallengeable necessity of nature in your breast, of dark blue appearance, adamantine, sparkling, of changeful form, all-seeing, father of Cronos, blessed one, demon that is highest of all, hear my prayer, bringing a holy life to the initiate who has just come into sight.

The two sources give an indication, perhaps, of Ronsard's intentions in his own hymn: not so much a summary of any astronomical system, but rather a more general statement of his views concerning the nature of the translunar world, defined through a kind of poetic commentary on the two sources. This mingling of the two sources explains the apparent replacement of Marullus' "Natura potens" by

“Anangé” in Ronsard’s poem (l. 101), noted by Isabelle Pantin and others.<sup>39</sup> Although much of Ronsard’s hymn appears to have come from both of these two poems, for example:

Tu metz les Dieux au joug d’Anangé la fatalle

.....

La Nature en ton sein ses ouvrages respand  
(lines 101 & 103)

(You yoke the gods to fateful Anangkê ... Nature spreads her works within your breast)

ἐν στέρνοισιν ἔχων φύσεως ἀτλητον ἀνάγκην (line 6)

(holding the unchallengeable necessity [anangkê] of Nature in your breast)

Qui Naturae sancta potentis  
Ipsos vocas sub iuga coelites (lines 10–11)

(who summon the gods themselves beneath the inviolable yoke of mighty Nature)

it is clear that other elements are derived from only one of the two sources; for example, compare:

Toy, qui n’as ton pareil, & ne sembles qu’à un, ...  
(line 84)

(You who are unparalleled and seem like the one, ...)

with

... par nulli, similis uni (line 4)  
(equal to none, like the one);

or:

... en doute suis de toy,  
Si je te dois nommer meilleur pere que Roy  
(lines 111–12)

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<sup>39</sup> See “L’Hymne du Ciel,” in *Autour des “Hymnes” de Ronsard*, 193–94.

(I hesitate whether I should better call you father or king)  
with:

Pater incertum rexne melior (line 18)

(It is uncertain whether father or king is better);

or, for the Greek source, compare:

Te faisant tournoyer en sphere rondement (line 32)

(Causing you to spin round like a sphere)

with:

σφαιρηδὸν ελίσσόμενος περὶ γαῖαν (line 3)

(whirling like a sphere around the earth);

or:

Aimantin, varié, azuré, tournoyant,  
Filz de Saturne, Roy treshaut, & tout voyant,  
CIEL, grand Palais de DIEU, exauce ma priere  
(lines 115–17)

(Adamantine, of changing form, azure-colored, spinning, son  
of Saturn, king most high, and all-seeing Sky, great palace of  
God, answer my prayer)

with:

κυανόχρως, ἀδάμαστε, παναίολε, αἰδολόμορφε,  
πανδερκές, Κρονότεκνε, μάκαρ, παννύεργτατε δαίμον,  
κλυθ' (lines 7–9)

(of dark blue appearance, adamantine, sparkling, of changeful  
form, all-seeing, father of Cronos,<sup>40</sup> blessed one, demon that  
is highest of all, hear my prayer . . .)

The “Ciel” that Ronsard has in mind in this poem is the Platonic  
heaven of the *Timaeus*, overlaid with the usual elements of syncre-  
tism that we would expect in the Renaissance. Previous scholars have  
commented on the allusion to Plato’s theory of reminiscence (lines  
11–14) and the theme of the freeing of the soul from the body at the

<sup>40</sup> The Greek word κρονότεκνος means “father of Cronos,” according to Liddell and Scott, but Ronsard takes it to mean “son of Cronos.”



end of the poem (lines 118–22). But few, including Germaine Lafeuille, have seen the hymn as doing anything other than paying lip service to Platonic ideas. However, Richelet's comments, reported by Laumonier (L. VIII. 141. n. 6), on the influence of the *Timaeus* may not be so far from the truth.

The spherical shape of the heaven and its movement on an axis are both propounded by Plato, as well, of course, as the idea of the circle or sphere being the most perfect form; compare Ronsard, lines 17–18, and 32–34, and *Timaeus* 33B and 34A:

And for shape he gave it that which is fitting and akin to its nature. For the living creature that was to embrace all living creatures within itself, the fitting shape would be the figure that comprehends in itself all the figures there are: accordingly, he turned its shape rounded and spherical, equidistant every way from center to extremity—a figure the most perfect and uniform of all; for he judged uniformity to be immeasurably better than its opposite. . . .

He assigned to it the motion proper to its bodily form, namely that one of the seven which above all belongs to reason and intelligence; accordingly, he caused it to turn about uniformly in the same place and within its own limits and made it revolve round and round.

Present too in the *Timaeus* is the idea of the perpetual nature of the Heaven, compare Ronsard, lines 23–28 and 101–10, and *Timaeus* 37C–38C:

Time came into being together with the Heaven, in order that, as they were brought into being together, so they may be dissolved together, if ever their dissolution should come to pass; and it is made after the pattern of the ever-enduring nature, in order that it may be as like that pattern as possible; for the pattern is a thing that has being for all eternity, whereas the Heaven has been and is and shall be perpetually throughout all time. (38B–C)

The theory of the harmony of the spheres (lines 35–44) is not expounded in the *Timaeus* as such, although the World Soul is divided up into harmonic intervals (35A–36B). However, this Pythagorean

idea is contained in the Myth of Er (*Republic* 10. 617), as is the theme of Necessity (Anangkê) and its chains; compare lines 101–10 and *Republic* 10. 616:

... arriving at the center of the light, they saw that its extremities were fastened by chains to the sky. For this light binds the sky together, like the hawser that strengthens a trireme, and thus holds together the whole revolving universe. To the extremities is fastened the distaff of Necessity, by means of which all the revolutions of the universe are kept up.

Other Platonic themes in the *Hymne du Ciel* include the idea that there is only one heaven (compare lines 87–100 and *Timaeus* 31A–B); and that the heavenly vault is self-nourishing (compare lines 51–58 and *Timaeus* 33C–D).

The central part of the hymn consists of lines 45–78 where Ronsard alludes to the meaning of the word “kosmos,” speaks of God’s role in its creation, and of the fact that it is his “palais royal,” from where he looks down upon the mortal world. This long central section (a single paragraph of 34 lines) is then balanced on either side by two subdivided parts, each of 44 lines. This concern with balance and tripartite division clearly aim to emphasize the theme of heavenly harmony and the perfection of the sphere. As Isabelle Pantin points out in her structural analysis of the hymn, Ronsard “donn[e] au poème l’aspect uni d’une petite sphère.”<sup>41</sup> Schematically, then, we have a ring pattern which may be represented as follows:

1-14	}		Address to Morel	}
15-28		44	Revolution of heaven: speed, perpetual nature	
29-44			God moves heaven: perfect form, movement of others	
45-78	34	Heavenly and earthly fire; kosmos as home of God		
79-86	}		Superiority of heaven over earth	
87-100		44	There is only one heaven: infinite	
101-112			Anangkê and perpetual revolution	
113-122			Valediction and prayer	

<sup>41</sup> “*L’Hymne du Ciel*,” 207.

As in the *Hymne de la Justice* and the *Hymne de l'Or*, Ronsard links these two poems by the repetition of certain themes. For example, the image of Ajax guarding the Greeks in the *Prière à la Fortune* (lines 204–10) is repeated in the introduction of the *Hymne du Ciel* (lines 6–8).

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The 1555 book of hymns is a carefully structured and thought-out collection of poems, even if from the poetic point of view there is a certain unevenness in the quality of individual works. The *persona* of the poet, with regard to the overall tone and style, is important: Ronsard presents himself as an authoritative figure, at times inspired, with a largely persuasive and didactic purpose in mind. As a result, much of the poems' contents is given over to expository writing, and when Ronsard does have recourse to mythology and allegory, it tends to be in the didactic tradition. Although the ideas he presents are frequently complex (and Platonic in origin), the manner of presentation is generally meant to be explicit, and mythology is used in order to illustrate and to clarify ideas rather than to veil them. In writing like this, Ronsard is following Plato's own practice in such myths as the Cavern and the myth of Er.

When it comes to visual representation, and particularly the use of ecphrasis and hypotyposis, Ronsard consequently tends to work in the didactic tradition of imagery. Allegorical figures are presented with their attributes, human figures are shown in divine guises. Some notable exceptions to this are the myth in the *Hymne de l'Or* concerned with the discovery of gold, where Ronsard may be matching his poetic voice to the dedicatee of the poem, Jean Dorat, and a number of the scenes in the *Hercule Chrestien*, where the typological allegory requires a mystical interpretation of the events in the life of Hercules.

The *dispositio* of the 1555 hymns has been central in my discussion, with the circular ring pattern mirroring the Platonic notion of perfection both in the book as a whole as well as in individual poems. In addition, it also reflects the circular movement of the heavens, which is such an important theme in the five central hymns of the collection. The kind of comment made by Rudolf Wittkower with regard to Renaissance church design, by McAllister Johnson

about the Galerie François I<sup>er</sup>, and by Margaret McGowan about Renaissance dance, are applicable to the structure of Ronsard's first collection of hymns: harmony may be introduced into the sublunar world not only through the content of the hymns, but also through their form.



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Musée national de la Renaissance, Écouen, France



Fig. 2. Jean Mignon, *Diana and Actaeon* (?1543–1545), 430 x 575 mm



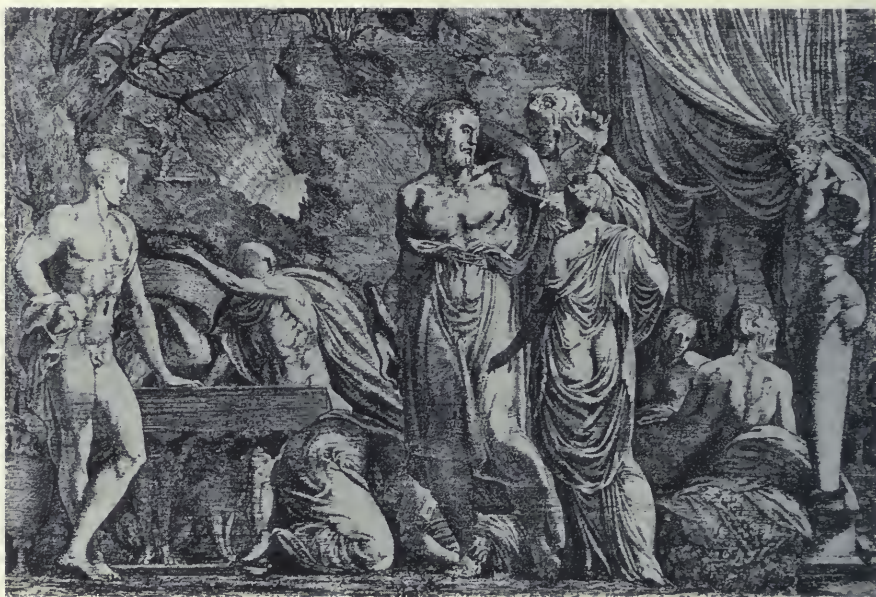


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Fig. 6. The Cyclopes in Mount Etna and Venus and Vulcan, illustration from 1544 edition of *P. Virgilii Maronis Opera* (Venice, Juntae), fol. 408<sup>r</sup>, 135 x 155 mm





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Fig. 8. Maître de Flore, *Allegory*, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France





Fig. 9. Alciati, Emblem 122, *In Occasionem*, 88 x 88 mm



Fig. 10. Master L. D., after Primaticcio,  
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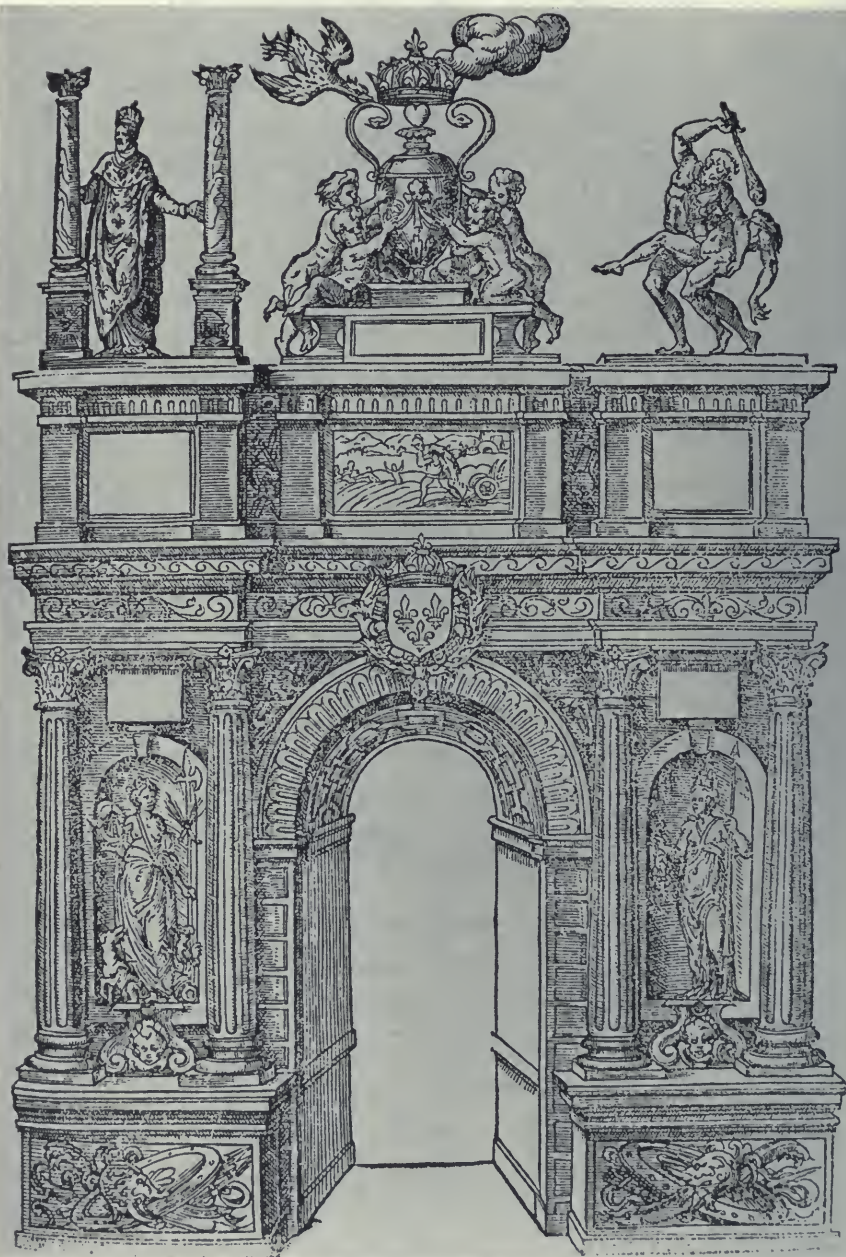


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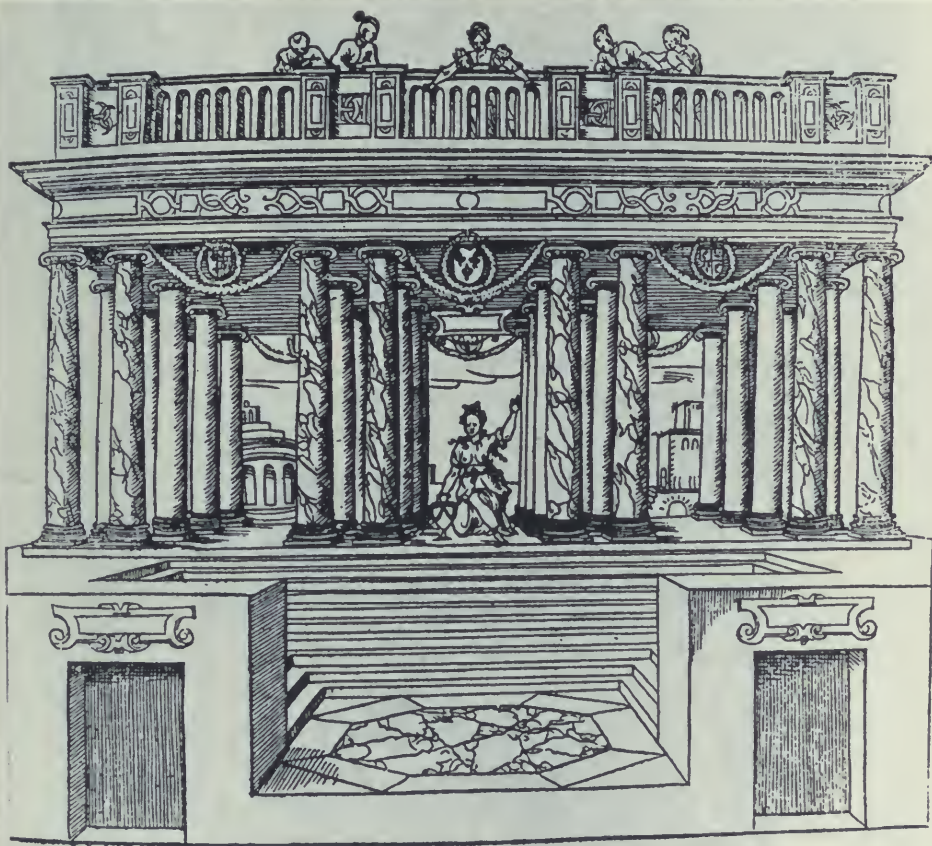


Fig. 12. Pandora arcade, from 1549  
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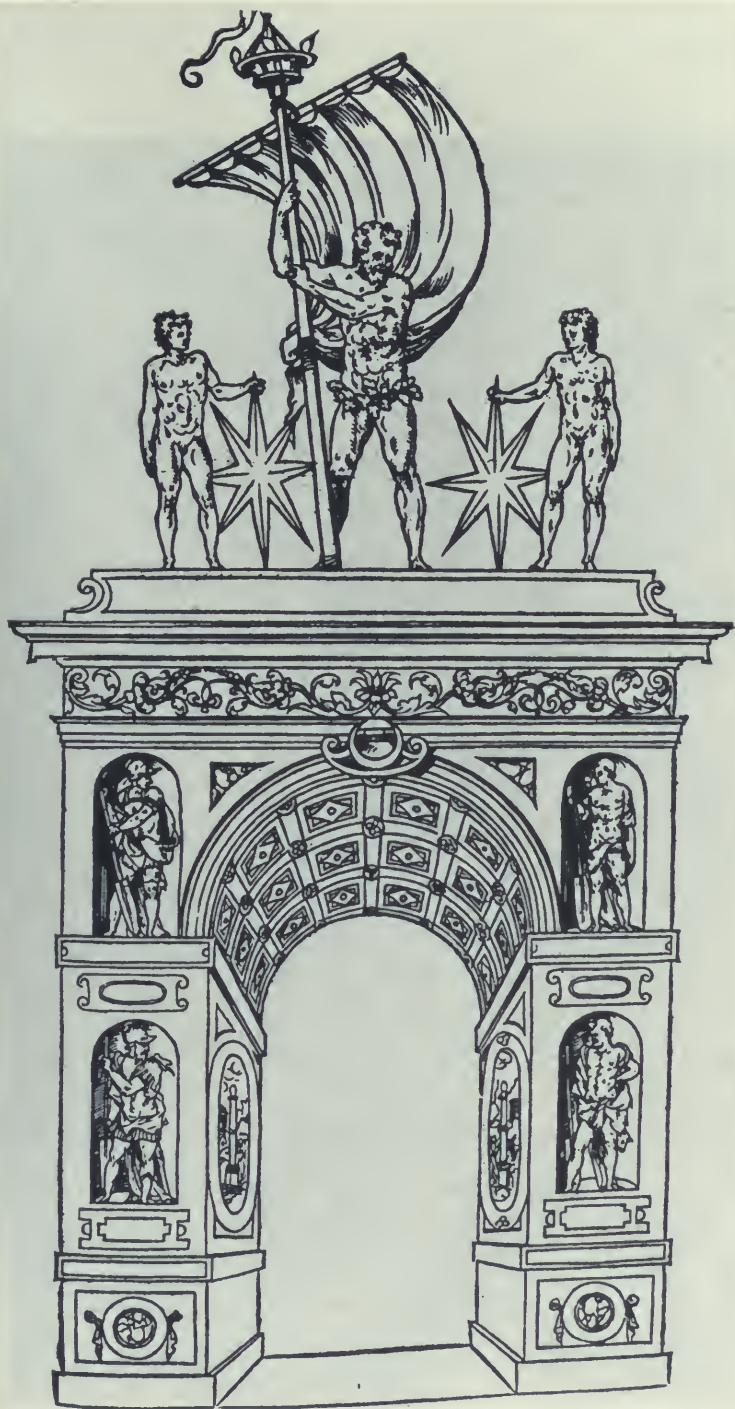


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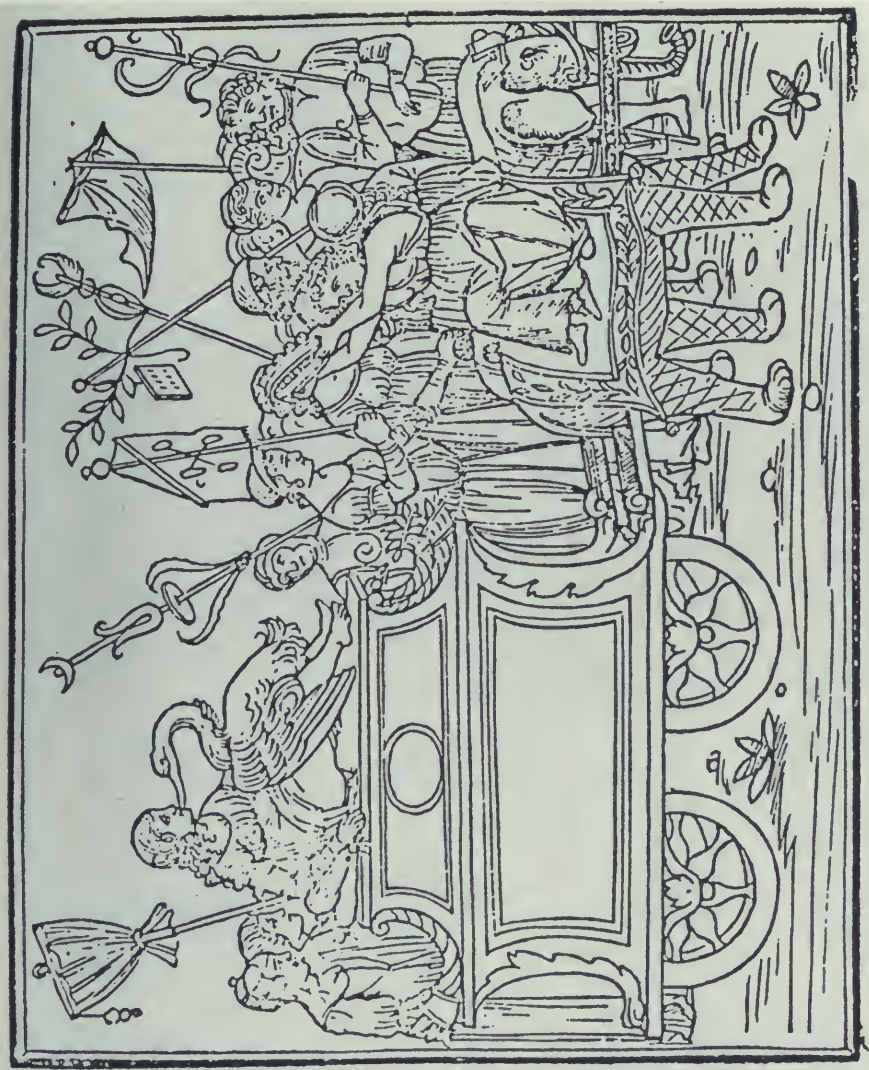


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Fig. 26. Jean Mignon, *Dares and Entellus*, 309 x 439 mm



Fig. 27. Primaticcio, *Vulcan's Forge*, Salle de Bal, Musée national du château de Fontainebleau, France







## CHAPTER 6

# *Le Second Livre des Hymnes*

This then is the fourth type of madness, which befalls when a man, reminded by the sight of beauty on earth of the true beauty, grows his wings and endeavors to fly upward.

(Plato, *Phaedrus* 249)

**T**he 1556 *Second Livre des Hymnes* contains only three examples of the genre, along with two other poems, the *Epistre à tresillustre prince Charles, Cardinal de Lorraine* and the *Elegie à Chretophle de Choiseul, abbé de Mureaux*. Nevertheless, the hymns were destined to assume a prominent position in Ronsard's works, with the *Hymne de l'Eternité* opening all subsequent collections of the hymns, and the two narrative hymns, the *Hymne de Calais, et de Zetes* and the *Hymne de Pollux et de Castor*, split up from 1560 onwards and occupying second or third place in books 1 and 2 of the various editions. The first two hymns, though very different in nature, are linked together by their dedicatee, the early champion and patron of the Pléiade, Marguerite de France, while the third hymn is dedicated to Gaspard de Coligny, who, along with his brother Odet, featured prominently in the 1555 collection, as we have seen in chapter 5.

Ronsard sets out to establish the vital importance of poetry in the three hymns while at the same time providing samples of the epic style in the two narrative poems. Given the impermanent nature of the sublunar world, already at the heart of the 1555 collection, he reiterates the idea that poetry is a surer way to some form of immortal renown for a patron than art and architecture, and because of its inspired nature can lead mortals to an apprehension of divine truth. The two poems closing the book continue to emphasize the immor-

talizing effects of poetry, and Ronsard states this explicitly in his long poem to the cardinal de Lorraine, where an element of nationalism, not to say professional jealousy, also enters his argument:

Je ne scaurois penser que des peintres estranges  
 Meritent tant que nous, les postes des loüenges,  
 Ny qu'un tableau basty par un art otieux  
 Vaille une Franciade, œuvre laborieux.

(L. VIII. 344. 383-86)

(I cannot think that foreign painters deserve as much as do we, the heralds of praise, or that a picture made by idle art can be worth a *Franciade*, a work of great effort.)

Thus, despite the apparently disparate nature of the poems which make up this book, there are strong thematic links between them, and a chronological progression from the timelessly eternal trans-lunar world, through the mythological past, to the immediate present.

The three hymns are good illustrations of the alliance of poetry and philosophy, with strong visual elements present. Indeed, much of the *Hymne de l'Eternité* is given over to a hypotyposis describing the deity in all her glory, while the mythological hymns contain motifs which were often exploited by artists as well as poets to celebrate the Valois dynasty and the prominent members of its court. Although close identification between mythological figures and real people tends to be somewhat fluid at this time (and given the rival factions to which Ronsard appeals, even within the confines of the *Second Livre des Hymnes*, this was no doubt deliberate), Ronsard does make a flattering connection between the Dioscuri and the cardinal de Lorraine in the *Epistre* dedicated to the prelate:

Ainsy tout esbranlé dedans la court j'estois,  
 Maintenant assuré, maintenant je doutois  
 Lesquelz des grandz seigneurs me tiendroient la main forte,  
 Quant je vous vy sortir tout rouge d'une porte,  
 Flambant pour mon secours, comme les deux jumeaux  
 En un temps orageux flambent de sur les naux,  
 Pour sauver du peril les hommes qui de crainte  
 Et de palle frayeur ont la face despaite.

(L. VIII. 340. 285-92)

(Thus I was quite at sea in the court, at one time full of confidence, at another uncertain which of the great lords would come to my assistance, when I saw you in a blaze of scarlet come out of a door, burning as a sign of aid to me as the two twins blaze in a storm above ships to save from peril men whose faces are marked by fear and pale terror.)

However, even within Ronsard's own works, different identifications are to be found. In the 1555 hymn dedicated to Henry II (L. VIII. 10. 97ff.), we have seen that it is the king who is associated with Castor and Pollux, and the Coligny brothers are likewise closely allied to them in the hymn devoted to them in the 1556 collection.

As we have seen, the theme of Jason and the Argonauts had also been exploited in Henry II's triumphal entry into Paris in 1549. One of the arches through which the procession passed was specifically concerned with the Argonaut story, and figured the pilot of the Argo, Tiphys, with the features of the king himself (fig. 21). The contemporary description of the arch is as follows.<sup>1</sup> On a plinth on the top:

... could be seen standing a Tiphys ten feet tall, whose face was very similar to that of the triumphant king. ... He held in both hands a tall ship's mast, furnished with a crow's nest and a large sail of taffeta striped with silver. On his right was a silver Castor and on his left a completely black Pollux, larger

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<sup>1</sup> See *The Entry of Henri II into Paris 16 June 1549*, ed. McFarlane, fol. 15<sup>r</sup> for the illustration, and fols. 13<sup>v</sup>-14<sup>r</sup> for the description. The French text is: "... se pouuoit veoir debout vn Typhis de dix piez en stature, dont la figure appochoit bien fort de celle du Roy triumpheateur. ... En ses deux mains il tenoit vn grand mast de nauires, garny de hune & d'un grand voile de taffetas rayé d'argent. A sa dextre y auoit vn Castor argenté, & à sa senestre vn Pollux tout noir, plus grans que le naturel, & toutesfois semblans petiz au pres de la grande corpulence de leur pilotte. Le Castor tenoit en l'une de ses mains vne grande estoile noir, & le Pollux vne d'argent, pour designer l'immortalité ou renouvellement de vie: & aux deux autres tenoyent chascun son ancre, signifians assurance en nauigation. Puis en l'autre face y en auoit vn pareil nombre de platte painture, tant bien designez & mis en couleur, qu'ils ne cedoyent à ceulx de relief, cestoyent Theseus & Pyritous avec Zetus & Calais. Tous lesquels pour estre de nation gregois, disoyent à leur Typhis apres Homere,

HMEIE EMMEMAΩTEE AM 'EΨOMEΘA

Qui signifie, Nous desiroux & prompts te voulons suyure ensemble."

than life but nevertheless seeming small besides the great bulk of their helmsman. The Castor held in one of his hands a large black star, and the Pollux a silver one, to designate immortality or renewal of life; and in their other two hands, they each held an anchor, signifying safety at sea.

Four niches contained statues of four of the principal Argonauts: Telamon, Peleus, Hercules, and Hylas.

Then opposite there were a like number painted on the side, so well drawn and colored that they were not inferior to those in relief: Theseus and Pirithous with Zetes and Calais. Because they were Greek, they were all saying to their Tiphys in the words of Homer:

HMEΙΣ ΕΜΜΕΜΑΩΤΕΣ ΑΜ 'ΕΨΟΜΕΘΑ

which means: "We shall readily follow you together."

Finally, there were two inscriptions beneath Tiphys himself: "Alter erit iam Typhis, & altera quae vehat Argo / Delectos heroas" ("With a second Tiphys at the helm, a second Argo will carry a choice crew of heroes"), a quotation from Virgil's prophetic *Eclogue* 4 (lines 34–35), with "tum" changed to "iam"; and:

Par lantique Typhis Argo fut gouvernée,  
Pour aller conquérir d'or la riche toison:  
Et par vous Roy prudent à semblable raison,  
Sera nostre grand nef heureusement menée.

Cela estoit dict au Roy, pour autant qu'il est gouverneur de la nef de Paris, non inferieure à l'ancienne Argo.

("Argo was steered by ancient Tiphys to go to conquer the rich golden fleece, and similarly our great ship will be happily guided by you, wise king." This was said to the king in as much as he is the helmsman of the ship of Paris, in no way inferior to the ancient Argo.)

Thus, not only would the story of the Argonauts have been popularized in this royal entry, but also important parallels would have been established between the Argo and Paris or the ship of state,<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The arms of the city of Paris include, of course, a ship, while the motto, "Fluctuat nec mergitur," was introduced in the course of the sixteenth century.



Tiphys and the King, the Argonauts and Henry's nobles. It is interesting to note that already Castor and Pollux are specifically associated with the concept of immortality, while their black and silver stars and bodies must refer to the legend according to which the deathless Pollux shared his immortality with his twin out of brotherly love, so that they spent one day in heaven, the other in their tomb. When Ronsard came to organize the royal entry of Charles IX in 1571, he himself would use the Dioscuri on one of the arches, this time to represent the king and his brother Henry bringing peace to the ship of state (fig. 24).

Ronsard was not the only poet to exploit the Argonaut theme, and two years after the publication of these hymns, Etienne Jodelle used the story in his celebration of the capture of Calais from the English in January 1558. The *Recueil des inscriptions, figures, devises, et masquarades ordonnées en l'hostel de ville à Paris le Jeudi 17 de Fevrier 1558* is both a record of the events and an *apologia* for those aspects of them that went wrong because of faulty workmanship and over-hasty preparation. However, it is clear that there is by this time a rich tradition associating the events and heroes of the Argonautica with the Valois court. In their edition of the work, Graham and Johnson cite Barthélemy Aneau's 1549 gloss on the Alciati emblem, "Spes proxima," which features the Dioscuri: "Translation d'une nef agitée de tourmente: à une Republicque vexée. Et des feux de Castor, et Pollux: aulx defenseurs de Republicque, ou survenue de bon Prince, ou bons gouverneurs" ("Metaphor of a storm-tossed ship for a troubled state. And the fires of Castor and Pollux for the defenders of the state, or arrival of a good prince or good governors").<sup>3</sup>

In the masque that he organized, Jodelle creates parallels between Jason and Henry II in Jason's first speech:

Je sçay mesme, qu'un jour et la Toison dorée  
Et le sceptre, et les biens, et la race honorée,  
De ceus qui vont portant en leur col la Toison  
Sentiront que Henry est leur fatal Jason. . . .<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Le Recueil des inscriptions, 1558: A Literary and Iconographical Exegesis*, edited by Victor E. Graham and W. McAllister Johnson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 183.

<sup>4</sup> *Le Recueil des inscriptions*, 108.

(I know that one day both the golden fleece and the scepter and the riches and the honored race of those who wear around their neck the fleece will recognize that Henry is their destined Jason....)

He goes on to mention the defeat of Amycus, and Calais and Zetes' rescue of Phineus from the Harpies, and his final speech establishes a whole series of parallels between members of the French court and the gods and heroes involved in the Argo story.

Ne crain donq' point, tu as des Deesses et Dieus  
 Comme nous, pour ta guide et faveur en tous lieux,  
 Ta femme est ta Junon, ta seur est ta Minerve,  
 Qui le droit de la nostre à bon droit se reserve:  
 Et bien que nous n'eussions autre support sinon  
 Que celui de Pallas, et celui de Junon,  
 Tu as outre ces deus une tierce Deesse,  
 Une Diane archere, et chaste, et chasseresse.  
 Ce bon Roy Navarrois son jeune frere encor  
 Te pourront bien servir de Pollux et Castor,  
 Ce grand vainqueur de Guise est ore ton Hercule,  
 Qui sous toy, l'Espagnol outrepasant recule,  
 Calais et Zethes sont deus freres qu'il a,  
 De deus freres encor un chacun choisira  
 Le nom qu'il lui est propre, et l'autre divin frere  
 Qui d'un double conseil les affaires modere  
 Avecq la pieté, sera ton grand Typhis  
 Gouverneur de la nef...<sup>5</sup>

(Fear not, then; you have gods and goddesses like us to guide and help you everywhere: your wife is your Juno, your sister your Minerva who rightly reserves for herself the rights of our Minerva; and even if we had no other support than that of Pallas and Juno, you have besides these two a third goddess, Diana the archer, the chaste hunter. The good king of Navarre and his young brother too can certainly serve you as Pollux and Castor, the great conquerer Guise is now your Hercules

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<sup>5</sup> *Le Recueil des inscriptions*, 114–15.

who under you repulses the overweening Spaniard, and Calais and Zetes are two brothers of his; of a further two brothers each one will choose the name which is right for him, and the other divine brother who with twofold advice governs affairs piously will be your great Tiphys, helmsman of the ship. . . .)

Thus, Diana is Diane de Poitiers; Castor and Pollux are Antoine de Bourbon and his brother Louis, prince de Condé; Hercules is François de Guise; Calais and Zetes are Claude and François de Lorraine; and the Cardinal de Lorraine is represented as Tiphys. Later in Jodelle's *Icones*, however, it is Gaspard de Coligny who appears to be identified with Castor and Pollux.<sup>6</sup>

To return to the *Second Livre des Hymnes*, the arrangement of the poems in the collection is largely thematic, and is centered around the notion that poetry is able, in the sublunar world, to combat the ephemeral nature of human affairs. As we shall see, the opening poem, the *Hymne de l'Eternité*, poses the question and acts as a theoretical and philosophical introduction to the two long mythological hymns; these both repeat this theme and exemplify it, demonstrating in turn the importance of the Apollonian arts in the search for transcendent truth; the final pair of poems applies these lessons from the heroic past to the present and the future. In addition to these thematic links, all the poems are written in alexandrines, and there are considerable cross references between them to emphasize the cohesive nature of the collection.

The character of the dedicatee of the entire collection is, of course, crucial in this respect. Marguerite de France had been a constant defender and patron at court of Ronsard and the other members of the Brigade, hence Ronsard's description of her in the *Hymne de l'Eternité* (lines 13–14) as “une qui merite, / Qu'avec l'Eternité sa gloire soit escrite” (“one who deserves her renown to be inscribed with Eternity”). Although there is only one other allusion to Marguerite in this poem, contained in the final prayer (lines 141–42) that

Je puisse voyr au ciel la belle Margarite,  
Pour qui j'ay ta louange en cet hymne descrite

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<sup>6</sup> *Le Recueil des inscriptions*, 183.



(I may see in heaven the beautiful Marguerite, for whom I have written your praises in this hymn)

it is clear that she will attain poetic immortality only because she deserves it by her patronage of poets; and the main body of the hymn has set out to demonstrate in largely Platonic terms the impossibility of gaining any form of immortality in the sublunar world. This idea that poetic renown only goes to those who merit it is repeated far more emphatically and didactically at the start of the *Hymne de Calais, et de Zetes* where Ronsard, still addressing Marguerite, writes:

Ostéz vostre bonté, douceur, humanité,  
 Ostéz vostre pitié, clemence, charité,  
 Montréz vous en parolle & fiere & arrogante,  
 Mespriséz un chascun qui à vous se presente,  
 On vous laissera là, & ne trouverez plus  
 Homme qui se travaille à chanter voz vertus.  
 Mais tant que vous seréz telle comme vous estes,  
 Presque en depit de vous, à l'envy les poètes  
 Espandront vos honeurs aux oreilles de tous.

(lines 31-39)

(Take away your goodness, gentleness, and humanity, take away your pity, mercy, and charity, show yourself cruel and arrogant in speech, scorn everyone who presents himself to you, and you will be abandoned there and no longer find anyone who will exert himself to sing of your virtues. But so long as you remain as you are, almost in spite of yourself, poets will vie to spread your honors to everybody's ears.)

But not content with this *ominatio*, Ronsard delivers a stern warning at the end of this hymn to those "Seigneurs nonchallantz" who disdain or fail suitably to recompense poets (lines 729-36):

Ils aymeront trop mieux faire grande leur race,  
 Ou batir des Palais, que d'aquerir la grace  
 Des Muses, les chetifs! qui ne cognoissent pas  
 Qu'à la fin leurs chateaux trebuscheront à bas,  
 Et qu'en moins de cent ans leurs races incognues  
 Se traineront sans nom, par les tourbes menues.



Laisson les donque là, puis qu'ils veulent mourir  
Sans gloire & sans renon.

(They will prefer to increase their families, or build palaces, rather than acquire the favour of the Muses, wretches! who fail to recognize that in the end their castles will tumble down and that in under a century their unknown families will trail around with no name, through the humble masses. Let us abandon them there, then, since they want to die without glory and renown.)

The end of the *Hymne de Pollux et de Castor* contains a positive reinforcement of this lesson in its prayer to favor Ronsard's patron, Gaspard de Coligny, who, by the allusion in line 756 to Horace, *Odes* 1. 1. 2, is associated with the Roman poet's famous patron, Maecenas:<sup>7</sup>

Donnez à ma chanson une gloire eternelle,  
Non mienne, mais la vostre, & celle de Gaspard,  
Mon confort, mon honneur, ma gloire, & mon rempart.  
(lines 754–56)

(Give my song eternal glory, not mine but yours, and that of Gaspard, my comfort, my honor, my glory, and my defense.)

As we have suggested, the *Hymne de l'Eternité* expounds in clearly Platonic terms Ronsard's ideas on the nature of time and mortality, and these ideas are presented both visually (in a striking hypotyposis which occupies lines 27–78) and discursively. That Ronsard has in mind Plato's model of Eternity and Time is clear from the previous chapter, where we saw that, in creating the universe, God wanted to make it as far as possible like the Living Being. However, since the universe is in the realm of Becoming, it cannot itself be eternal, but is governed by Time, "an everlasting likeness [of Eternity] moving according to number." Thus, Plato writes:

For there were no days and nights, months and years, before the Universe came into being; but he planned that they should now come to be at the same time that the Heaven was framed.

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<sup>7</sup> Horace addresses his patron as "o et praesidium et dulce decus meum" ("o my defense and my sweet glory").

All these are parts of Time, and “was” and “shall be” are forms of time that have come to be; we are wrong to transfer them unthinkingly to eternal being. (*Timaeus* 37E)

Many of these ideas are echoed in Ronsard’s hymn, as in lines 6–10:

... celle qui jamais pour les ans ne se change,  
 Mais bien qui faict changer les siecles & les temps,  
 Les moys, & les saisons & les jours inconstans,  
 Sans jamais se muer, pour n'estre point subjecte,  
 Comme Royne & maistresse, à la loy qu'ell' a faicte;

(... she who never changes with the years, but who causes the centuries and times to change, and the months and seasons and the flitting days, without ever being transformed since she is not subject to the law she made, being queen and mistress.)

and also lines 105–9:

La grand troupe des Dieux ...

.....

Quand elle parle à toy ne dict point il sera,  
 Il fut, ou telle chose ou telle se fera,  
 C'est à faire aux humains à dire telle chose.

(The great troop of the gods ... when they speak to you do not say “there shall be,” “there was,” or such and such a thing will happen; it is for humans to say such things.)

We have seen that, according to Proclus in his commentary on the *Timaeus*, Eternity is linked to the sublunar world by a chain of being:<sup>8</sup>

It is certain in any case that, of the whole of this series, which is the real “golden chain,” the summit is the race of intelligible gods, the lower limit the race of the sublunar gods who direct creation in an uncreated way and Nature in a supernatural way. (162; 5. 19)

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<sup>8</sup> See above, chap. 5.

Ronsard perhaps alludes to this theme in lines 79–81:

O grande Eternité, merveilleux sont tes faictz!  
 Tu nourris l'univers en eternelle paix,  
 D'un lien aimantin les siecles tu attaches. . .

(Oh great Eternity, wondrous are your deeds! You sustain the universe in eternal peace, you bind the ages with an adamantine chain. . .)

making the allusion clearer in 1584, when line 81 becomes: “*De chainons enlassez les siecles tu attaches . . .*” (“You bind the ages with an interlocked chain”). However, this link only serves to emphasize the enormous gulf that separates Eternity (“*Sans rien faire tu vis en tous biens plantureuse*” [“without doing anything, you live surrounded by all riches”], line 26) and mortal men (“*Que tu as heritez de peine & de soucy, / De vieillesse & de mort, qui est leur vray partage . . .*” [“whom you have endowed with pain and care, old age and death, which is their true inheritance”], lines 88–89). Nevertheless, Eternity acts as a preserving force in the universe and, as we have seen in chapter 2, seems to correspond to Nicholas of Cusa’s visualization of God as “the center and circumference of the circle; for in the infinite circle or sphere, center, diameter, and circumference are identical” (cf. lines 246–54).<sup>9</sup>

The characteristics applied by Ronsard to Eternité may be summed up as follows:

- (a) immortality and stability (lines 6, 9)
- (b) self-sufficiency and wholeness (lines 26, 97–99, 127–28)
- (c) the ability to influence the sublunar world and to preserve it from destruction (lines 7–8, 80–86)
- (d) the ability to comprehend the full extent of time (lines 107–16, 123–24)
- (e) omnipresence (lines 128–33).

As in other Ronsard poems, many of these points are repeated visually in the central hypotyposis. Although there are a number of literary models for this hymn, notably Marullus’ *Hymnus Aeternitati*, which provides the bare bones of the poem, and the Orphic Testa-

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<sup>9</sup> See the section on *Dispositio*.

ment,<sup>10</sup> the majority of the details in the picture of Eternity enthroned in glory come from neither of these sources.

Tout au plus hault du Ciel dans un throsne doré,  
 Tu te siedz en l'abit d'un manteau coloré 28  
 De Pourpre rayé d'or, duquel la borderie  
 De tous costez s'esclatte en riche pierrerie.  
 Et là, tenant au poing un grand sceptre aimantin,  
 Tu ordonnes tes loix au severe Destin, 32  
 Qu'il n'ose oultrepasser, & que luy mesme engrave  
 Fermes au front du Ciel, ainsi qu'à toy esclave,  
 Faisant tourner soubz toy les neuf temples vultez,  
 Qui dedans & dehors cernent de tous costez, 36  
 Sans rien laisser ailleurs, tous les membres du monde,  
 Qui gist dessoubz tes piedz comme une boulle ronde.  
 A ton dextre costé la Jeunesse se tient,  
 Jeunesse au chef cresp, dont la tresse luy vient 40  
 Flottant jusqu'aux talons par ondes non tondue,  
 Qui luy frappe le doz en filz d'or estendue:  
 Cette Jeunesse ayant le teint de roses franc,  
 D'une boucle d'azur ceinte de sur le flanc, 44  
 Dans un vase doré te donne de la dextre  
 A boire du nectar, afin de te faire estre  
 Tousjours saine & disposte, & afin que ton front  
 Ne soit jamais ridé comme les nostres sont. 48  
 De l'aultre main senestre, avec grande rudesse  
 Repoulse l'estomac de la triste Vieillesse,  
 Et la chasse du Ciel à coups de poing, afin  
 Que le Ciel ne vieillisse, & qu'il ne prenne fin. 52  
 A ton aultre costé la Puissance eternelle  
 Se tient debout plantée, armée à la mammelle  
 D'un corselet gravé qui luy couvre le sein,  
 Branlant de nuict & jour une espée en la main, 56  
 Pour tenir en seurté les bordz de ton empire,

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<sup>10</sup> The Orphic Testament may be consulted in *Orphicorum fragmenta*, edited by Otto Kern (Berlin, 1922), 255-66. See too my article "Ronsard et l'emploi de l'allégorie dans le *Second Livre des Hymnes*," 93-96, for a discussion of the Testament.



Ton regne & ta richesse, afin qu'elle n'empire  
 Par la fuitte des ans, & pour donner la mort  
 A quiconque voudroit favoriser Discord, 60  
 Discord ton ennemy, qui ses forces assemble  
 Pour faire mutiner les Elementz ensemble  
 A la perte du Monde, & de ton doux repos,  
 Et voudroit, s'il pouvoit, rengendrer le cahos. 64  
 Mais tout incontinent que cet ennemy brasse  
 Trahison contre toy, la Vertu le menasse,  
 Et l'envoye là bas aux abysmes d'Enfer,  
 Garroté piedz & mains de cent liens de fer. 68  
 Bien loing derriere toy, mais bien loing par derriere,  
 La Nature te suit, Nature bonne mere,  
 D'un baston appuyée, à qui mesmes les Dieux  
 Font honneur du genoil quand elle vient aux Cieux. 72  
 Saturne apres la suict, le vieillard venerable,  
 Marchant tardivement, dont la main honorable,  
 Bien que vieille & ridée, eleve une grand faulx.  
 Où les Heures vont d'ordre à grandz pas tous egaulx, 76  
 Et l'An qui tant de fois tourne, passe & repasse,  
 Glissant d'un pied certain par une mesme trace.  
 (L. VIII. 246-54)

(At the summit of heaven on a golden throne, you sit dressed in a cloak colored purple striped with gold, whose embroidery sparkles on all sides with rich gems. And there, holding an adamantine scepter in your fist, you give harsh Destiny your laws, which he dares not overstep and which he himself engraves firmly on the brow of heaven, like your slave, revolving beneath you the nine vaulted temples which encompass inside and outside on all sides, without leaving anything elsewhere, all the limbs of the world, which lies beneath your feet like a round ball. On your right stands Hebe, curly-headed Hebe, whose unshorn locks float down in waves to her heels, striking her back, spread out in golden threads; this Hebe with her gracious rosy complexion, wearing around her flank an azure belt, gives you with her right hand nectar to drink from a golden vessel, in order to keep you for ever hale and hearty, so that your brow should never be wrinkled like ours. With

her other left hand, she roughly thrusts back the stomach of sad Old Age, and drives her from heaven with her fists so that heaven should not grow old and come to an end. On your other side stands eternal Fortitude, armed at the breast with an engraved corselet covering the chest, brandishing day and night a sword in her hand in order to protect the borders of your empire, your realm, and your wealth so that it does not deteriorate with the rapid passing of the years, and to deal death to whoever would favor Discord, Discord your foe, who gathers his forces to cause the elements to mutiny together to destroy the world and your sweet peace, and would engender chaos again if he could. But as soon as this foe stirs up treason against you, Virtue threatens him, and sends him below to the pit of Hell, tied hand and foot with a hundred iron bonds. Far behind you, very far, follows Nature, the good mother, leaning on a stick, to whom even the gods kneel down in reverence when she comes to heaven. Saturn follows after her, the venerable old man, walking haltingly, whose honorable hand, though old and wrinkled, carries aloft a great scythe, on which the Seasons proceed in order with great equal steps, and the Year which revolves so frequently comes and comes again, gliding sure-footedly along the same path.)

Rather than describing a single allegorical figure, Ronsard presents us here with an apocalyptic vision of the Universe, seen in terms of the perpetual struggle between the forces of harmony, preservation, and regeneration on the one hand and the forces of discord, degeneration, and destruction on the other. Eternity is presented as supreme ruler of the Universe, but with none of her usual symbols (the *ouroboros*, for example). All her attributes—throne, gold, purple robe, scepter (lines 27–31)—emphasize her regal qualities and her immortality, and her immutability is suggested by the fact that she alone is seated. Even the “severe Destin” is simply a slave, executing the will of Eternity throughout the whole of creation, which is represented by “une boulle ronde” (lines 32–38). Jeunesse is depicted, as we have seen in chapter 2, with the attributes of the goddess Hebe, cupbearer to the gods before Ganymede (lines 39–44). Endurance and vigor are denoted by her luxuriant hair and the use of the gold and blue coloring, gold being considered the most enduring of the metals, and blue

representing the heavens, another symbol of eternity. While her good-omened right hand provides Eternity with preserving nectar, the inauspicious left hand fends off Vieillesse (lines 45–50). Puissance, a Minerva-like figure, with breastplate and sword, also protects Eternity against Discord, aided by Vertu (lines 53–68). Nature, the generative principle in the sublunar world, appears behind Eternity, leaning on a stick (lines 69–71). This detail, like Vulcan's lameness elsewhere in Ronsard,<sup>11</sup> probably indicates the imperfection of Nature's powers, as in lines 92–96, where mankind's continuity cannot be maintained

Sinon par le succès de reparation,  
A laquelle Venus incite la Nature  
Par plaisir mutuel de chaque creature  
A garder son espece, & tousjours restaurer  
Sa race qui ne peut eternelle durer.

(... except through the success of renewal to which Venus incites Nature through the mutual pleasure of each creature to preserve its species and always to restore its race, which cannot last forever.)

Saturn, the embodiment of encosmic Time, is depicted as an old, lame man, equipped with a scythe, the symbol of destruction and rebirth, on which are represented allegorically the Hours (or Seasons, as in Hesiod, *Theogony* 902) and the Year (lines 73–78).

Thus, the description which Ronsard presents to us, though quite complex, is in the tradition of the theomachia, the battle between various allegorical divinities which, in this case, results in an eternal equilibrium of contrary forces, preserving the universe from chaos. However, although the views that Ronsard is proposing here are essentially Platonic in inspiration, the imagery used in this hypotyposis, like the imagery in the first collection of hymns, is largely, though not exclusively, in the didactic tradition: each of the attributes of the various deities reminds us of their various qualities. One aspect of the hymn with particular relevance to what follows in this collection concerns mortal man's inability to preserve the past:

<sup>11</sup> See my paper "Neoplatonic Fictions in the *Hymnes* of Ronsard," 51.



Nous aultres journalliers, nous perdons la memoire  
 Des temps qui sont passez, & si ne pouvons croire  
 Ceux qui sont à venir, comme estans imperfectz,  
 Et d'une masse brute inutilement faictz,  
 Aveuglez & perclus de la sainte lumiere,  
 Que le peché perdit en nostre premier pere.

(lines 117–22)

(We ephemeral beings lose the memory of bygone times, and yet we cannot trust those which are to come as we are imperfect, uselessly created from brute matter, blinded and paralyzed by the holy light, destroyed by sin in our first father.)

We shall see in the two following hymns that it is the particular gift of the poet to preserve the past, and to allow man glimpses at least of the “sainte lumiere” which Adam’s original sin has made generally unattainable.

It was important therefore that as showpieces to attract patronage for the *Franciade*, the two mythological hymns should be convincing, both in terms of their message and also as epic poetry capable of rivalling the best examples of contemporary art and architecture. At the same time, the figure of the *vates*, carrying on the Orphic tone of the *Hymne de l'Eternité*, is crucial in these poems. In the *Hymne de Calais, et de Zetes*, Ronsard devotes lines 57–72 to Orpheus, the second hero to be introduced in the catalogue of heroes after the princely leader of the expedition himself, Jason. Orpheus was similarly the first of the Argonauts mentioned by one of Ronsard’s sources, Apollonius of Rhodes (1. 23–34), although it is not to that source that Ronsard owes his own description, nor yet to his other main source, Valerius Flaccus (1. 470–72, where Orpheus is, however, as in Ronsard, exempt from rowing). The bard’s privileged position in this society of heroes as inspirer of future prowess and preserver of past deeds is emphasized by Ronsard in lines 65–72:

Ce noble Chantre avoit par sur tous privileges  
 Ne tirer l'aviron. Seulement de son siege  
 Tout au haut de la proüe avecque ses chansons  
 Donnoit courage aux Preux, les nommant par leurs noms,  
 Maintenant de ses vers rappelant en memoire  
 De leurs nobles ayeus les gestes & la gloire.

(lines 65–70)



(This noble bard enjoyed in particular the privilege of not rowing. From his seat at the top of the prow, he simply encouraged the heroes with his songs, naming them by their names or recalling to mind by his verse the deeds and glory of their noble forebears.)

In Valerius Flaccus, Orpheus had simply been a timekeeper (1. 471–72). Ronsard also devotes several lines (58–64) to a description of Orpheus' ivory harp. Other important figures in the catalogue of heroes include two other prophets: Idmon, who follows on from Orpheus (lines 73–78), and Mopsus, who is introduced just before Castor and Pollux (lines 113–28).

However, it is the figure of the blind prophet Phineus who is the central character in this hymn, in which Calais and Zetes act as his benefactors by freeing him from a plague of Harpies. There are many different accounts in ancient writers concerning the reasons for Phineus' blindness and punishment, and they are largely summed up in Natalis Comes' *Mythologiae*, book 6, chapter 6. The three basic reasons are:

- (1) he was given the choice by the Sun god of living a very long life blind, or of dying sooner without losing his sight, and he chose the former alternative;
- (2) he blinded or killed the two sons of his first wife (Cleopatra) because they were accused (wrongly) of raping his second wife;
- (3) he revealed too many of the gods' secrets to mortals.

The third account is followed by Ronsard's two main sources, Apollonius of Rhodes and Valerius Flaccus. Apollonius writes at 2. 179–82:

Phoebus had once endowed this man with prophetic powers, but the gift had brought on him the most appalling tribulations. For he showed no awe even for Zeus himself, delivering exactly in oracles his sacred purposes. Zeus punished him for this. . . .

Thus, Apollonius attributes some blame to Phineus for his lack of discretion, but Ronsard, in common with Valerius Flaccus, views his conduct as far more venial, compare lines 176–80:

Car le povre chetif n'estoit pas seulement  
Banny de son païs, & une aveugle nue

N'estoit pas seulement dessus ses yeus venue  
 Par le vouloir des Dieus, qui luy avoyent osté,  
 Pour trop prophetizer, le don de la clarté. . .

(For the poor wretch was not only exiled from his country, and not only had a cloud of blindness settled on his eyes by the will of the gods who had taken away from him the gift of light because he had delivered too many prophecies. . .)

and Valerius Flaccus who, although he writes "*talia prodigia et tales pro crimine poenas / perpetitur*" ("he suffers these monsters and these punishments for his crime"), has Phineus say later on:

fata loquax mentemque Iovis quaeque abdita solus  
 consilia et terris subito ventura parabat  
 prodideram miserans hominum genus; hinc mihi tanta  
 pestis et offusae media inter dicta tenebrae.

(Saying too much, I alone had betrayed destiny and the intentions of Jupiter and all the plans he was preparing which were hidden and soon to come on earth, pitying mankind; as a result there came to me this great plague and, just as I was speaking, an envelope of darkness.)

However, Ronsard's version is the only one in which authorial comment is entirely on the side of Phineus, a significant point for his interpretation of the story.

For Phineus is both blessed with and suffers because of Apollo's gifts (line 290): he is the divinely-inspired *vates* who, like Prometheus, is persecuted for trying to benefit mankind. Ronsard is drawing parallels in this hymn between Phineus and the poet; between the Harpies and unscrupulous courtiers, "les flateurs, les menteurs / Qui devorent leur [i.e., des Rois] bien, & de leurs serviteurs" ("the sycophants, the liars, who devour their wealth and that of their servants," lines 711-12); between Calais and Zetes and potential patrons (see lines 721-28). As a result, Ronsard imbues much of the poem with self-directed, bitter irony as, for example, in lines 199-200: "Ce chetif ne vivoit sinon que des morceaux / Qui de hazard tumboyent du bec de ces oiseaus" ("This wretch only lived on the scraps which happened to fall from the beaks of these birds"). Only the follower of Apollo can make known to men:

La volonté des Dieux, qui veulent leurs oracles  
 Estre tousjours voilez de ne sçay quels obstacles,  
 Et manques en partie, afin que les humains  
 Dressent tousjours au Ciel & le cœur & les mains,  
 Et qu'humbles envers Dieu, à Dieu secours demandent  
 Quand au sommet du chef les miseres leur pendent.

(lines 581–86)

(... the will of the gods, who want their oracles always to be veiled with obstacles of some kind and partly lacking, so that humans should always lift up their hearts and hands to heaven, and humbly in the face of God ask God for help when woes weigh down upon their heads.)

And only Apollo's follower can immortalize men. Those who realize this and help him are endowed with the wings of virtue, like Calais and Zetes, with which to ascend to the heights of knowledge, a Platonic theme derived from the *Phaedrus* 251B and C, and frequently used in the Pléiade's erotic poetry. Thus, Ronsard shows that the poet's benefactor not only benefits himself by having his deeds immortalized, but also, in the process of helping the poet, gains that knowledge of Truth that only the divinely inspired can confer.

The structure of this hymn is a relatively complex one, based on the principle of *emboîtement* or ring patterns. Schematically, it may be represented as follows:

- 1–42 Dedication to Calais and Zetes, and to Marguerite de France
- 43–168 Introduction of the Argonauts
- 169–336 Phineus: introduction, speech, sacrifice, and oath
- 337–368 Failed meal
- 369–452 Harpies chased away by Calais & Zetes
- 453–472 Successful meal
- 473–666 Phineus: sacrifice and prophecy
- 667–706 Return of Calais & Zetes; departure of Argonauts
- 707–740 Valediction, and condemnation of "Seigneurs nonchallantz"



There is thus a symmetrical, circular pattern arranged around the central narrative incident describing Calais and Zetes' pursuit of the Harpies. However, as in the Fontainebleau frescoes, there are many other details within this overall framework, and cross references to other poems in the *Second Livre des Hymnes*. What is more, the sym-



metrical structure of the hymn serves partly to emphasize certain opposing themes: for example, the support afforded to the Pléiade by Marguerite de France and her resultant celebration (first section) are sharply contrasted with the neglect of poets by the "Seigneurs non-challantz" of the final section (line 724) who as a consequence of their negligence of the arts are destined to die "Sans gloire & sans renon" (line 736). At the same time, the Platonically perfect circular structure of the poem is aimed at emphasizing the perfection associated with the Muses and Apollo.

It is, of course, upon the princely figure of Jason that Phineus' prophecy concentrates, an illustration of the benefits a ruler can acquire if he rewards the right people. In his chapter on Jason, Natalis Comes compares the hero to Hercules, Theseus, and Odysseus: "*vix ullus alius invenietur, qui tantam virtutem in rebus arduis prae se tulerit*" ("scarcely nobody else will be found who displayed so much courage in difficult situations"). And although he discusses the idea that Jason's search for the golden fleece is an allegory for the alchemical search for the philosopher's stone (fol. 180<sup>r</sup>), he prefers to see the fable in a moral interpretation:

Jason was said to have escaped safely from dangerous and terrifying monsters with the wise help of the gods, or certainly with the protection of those who serve the gods, and after setting off for Colchis to have overcome the fire-breathing, brazen-hoofed bulls, which should be considered as nothing other than the obstinacy and anger of his mind.

The golden fleece represents the highest human qualities, and in particular, says Comes, Justice. Viewed in this light, Ronsard's hymn presents a more unified aspect than if we simply consider the literal narrative meaning of the prophecy; the message for Henry II would have been quite clear, especially given the exploitation of the theme in his own 1549 Paris entry.

Despite the essentially symmetrical shape of the poem, it contains various elements which add variety and ornamentation, and which to some extent obscure the narrative progression. As an ingredient of the epic style, similes are prominent in both of the mythological hymns in the collection. It is in the nature of a comparison to suggest, by way of analogy, phenomena which are extraneous to the main thread of the writing, so that their presence interrupts narrative



progression and adds adornment which may appear to be unnecessary for an understanding of the composition in question. The parallel with decoration in the visual arts is evident, and the effect is similar: to divert the eye for a moment from the central composition yet, in some cases, to add depth to our appreciation of it. Let us consider some of the many examples of simile in the *Hymne de Calais, et de Zetes*.

When the two heroes have caught up with the Harpies, they attack them with their swords:

Mais autant eust valu frapper sur des enclumes,  
Car jamais nulle playe à la chair ne prenoit,  
Et du coup, sur l'espée aucun sang ne venoit.  
Ainsy que des bateurs qui frappent dans une aire  
Par compas les presens de nostre antique mere:  
L'aire faict un grand bruict, & le fleau durement  
Touchant dessus le bled rebondist haultement.  
Ainsy ces Boreans à grands coups d'alumelles  
Chamailloient sur le chef, sur les flancs, sur les ailes.

(lines 414-22)

(But it would have done as much good to hammer on anvils, for no wound ever affected their flesh, and no blood stained the sword with their blows. Just as threshers who rhythmically beat on a threshing floor the gifts of our ancient mother: the threshing floor resounds and the flail bounces high after it falls heavily on the wheat; so the sons of the North Wind belabored the heads, flanks, and wings with great blows of their sword blades.)

The development of the threshing image, while adding a graphic touch to Ronsard's description, nevertheless slows down the narrative flow by introducing a scene of rural activity which is far removed from the description of Calais and Zetes attacking the Harpies. In both cases, however, the outcome is beneficial. Ronsard offers alternative images to represent a sword rebounding from its target earlier in this hymn when he is describing the invincible

Cænée, à qui le fer rebouchoit sur la peau,  
Et contre-bondissoit, comme on void peslemesle  
Bondir au temps d'hyver sus l'ardoise la gresle,

Ou dessus une enclume un marteau par compas  
 Ressauter, quand Vulcan la frape à tour de bras.

(lines 104–8)

(Caeneus, on whose skin the sword became blunt and rebounded, as we see hail bouncing off slate in all directions in wintertime, or a hammer jumping rhythmically on an anvil, when Vulcan beats it with all his might.)

The hammer and anvil comparison, perhaps borrowed from Apollonius of Rhodes (3. 1251–52) is, as we have seen, briefly repeated with reference to the Harpies (line 278), though the nicely-observed hail-stone image is not. This is based on Virgil's description of the boxing match between Entellus and Dares, a model for the Amycus-Pollux fight in the following hymn: "quam multa grandine nimbi / culminibus crepitant, sic . . ." (*Aeneid* 5. 458–59). The allusion to slate roofs in Ronsard is a convincing detail, recalling the architecture of the Loire valley.

Meteorological imagery plays a prominent part in general in this poem, with allusions to whirlwinds (line 249), cloudbursts (lines 258–60), and lightning (lines 352 and 521–26). The last example is used to describe the Symplegades:

Les rochers tout ainsy que s'ils jouoient ensemble,  
 S'eslognent quelque peu, puis courent pour s'outrer  
 L'un l'autre à la rencontre, & à leur rencontrer  
 Un feu sort de leur front, ainsy que le tonnerre  
 Qui choquant rudement la nuë qui l'enserre  
 Au milieu de la nuict, des pluyes & du vent  
 Fait un jour de son feu qui se va resuivant,  
 Brillant à longue pointe, & la flamme eslançee  
 Des povres cœurs humains estonne la pensée.  
 Ainsy se vont hurtant ces rochers vagabonds. . .

(lines 518–27)

(The rocks draw somewhat apart as if they were playing together, then hasten to outdo each other as they clash, and on clashing, fire comes out of their cliff face, just as thunder which harshly striking its enclosing cloud in the midst of darkness, rains, and wind, creates daylight with its succession of flames, shining in a long flash, and the flame which has

shot out astounds the thoughts of poor mortal hearts; just so do these wandering rocks clash together. . . .)

Neither of Ronsard's sources, Apollonius and Valerius Flaccus, expand their description of the rocks with imagery of this kind, which once again presents variety and vividness to the description. Animal imagery is also very much to the fore in this poem, with allusions to birds (lines 62-64, 347-50, 370-72, 387-88, 399-400, 675-79), wolves (lines 189-92), hares (lines 405-8), mares (lines 659-60), rams (lines 509-10), and, in the final simile, a caterpillar:

Adonque la galere egalement tirée  
Aloit à dos rompu dessus l'onde azurée,  
Et de longs plis courbés s'entrecoupant le dos  
Se trainoit tortement sur les bosses des flots,  
Ainsy q'une chenille à dos courbé s'efforce  
De ramper de ses pieds sur le ply d'une escorce.  
(lines 697-702)

(Then the galley, drawn evenly along, went with broken back over the azure waves and, interrupting its back with long curved folds, trailed along crookedly on the crests of the waves, just as a curved-backed caterpillar struggles to crawl on its legs over a fold of tree bark.)

The details of the caterpillar crawling over tree bark is very well observed, and this comparison allows the reader to gain a graphic image to enhance the description of the ship sailing across the waves.

There are other elements of the hymn which slow down the narrative flow, such as vivid description. No fewer than seven lines, for example, are devoted to Orpheus' harp:

Là, descendit apres le chevelu Orphée,  
Qui tenoit dans ses mains une harpe estophée  
De deux coudes d'ivoire, où par rang se tenoient  
Des cordes, qui d'en haut inegalles venoyent  
A bas l'une apres l'autre, en biaiz chevillées:  
Ne plus ne moins qu'on voit les ailes esbranlées  
Des faulcons en volant, qui depuis les cerceaux  
En se suivant depres vont à rangs inegaux.  
(lines 57-64)

(There descended next hirsute Orpheus, who held in his hands a harp furnished with two ivory arms, from which were held in order strings of unequal length going from top to bottom in succession, pegged at a slant; just as one can see the flapping wings of hawks in flight, which proceed in close succession unevenly from their pinion feathers.)

Ronsard provides us here with a fuller description of the harp than of Orpheus himself (simply described as “chevelu”), all the more surprising, perhaps, in that his reader would be acquainted with the shape and structure of the instrument. However, the allusion to the hawk picks up one of the principal motifs of the poem, the link between music and the soul’s bird-like ascent to achieve knowledge.

A little later on, we find the vividly described ecphrasis of Castor and Pollux’s cloaks (lines 141–62). The description of the twins, just before the introduction of Calais and Zetes, marks a structural link with the hymn dedicated to them, and the ecphrasis presents visually themes which will be elaborated in the hymn dedicated to them.

Là, Castor & Pollux fleur de chevalerie,  
 Prindrent du bord marin la froide hostellerie,  
 L’un qui eut mieux piqué un beau cheval guerrier  
 Es champs Laconiens que d’estre marinier, 132  
 L’autre mieus escrimé que de tirer la rame:  
 Tout au haut de leur teste une jumelle flamme  
 Sembloit desja reluyre, & de larges rayons  
 Tymbrer tout le sommet de leurs beaux moryons, 136  
 Morryons façonnés d’invention gentille  
 Sur le mesme portraict de l’ovale coquille  
 Que l’un & l’autre avoit dessus la teste, alors  
 Que l’œuf de ses deux bouts les eclouït dehors. 140  
 Une robe de porpre ainsy que feu tramblante  
 Pendoit de leurs collets jusqu’au bas de leur plante,  
 Dont leur mere Leda, pour un present exquis,  
 Avoit au departir honoré ses deux fils, 144  
 Ouvriere, entrelassant d’une segrette voye  
 De petits fillets d’or aux fillets de la soye.  
 Au milieu de l’habit Taigette apparoissoit,  
 Où le cheval Cillare entre les fleurs païssoit, 148



Et plus bas sur le bord de ceste robe neuve,  
Eurote s'esgayoit, serpentant en son fleuve  
A longs tortis d'argent, où par belles façons  
Dessus le bord luittoient les filles aux garçons. 152  
Un œuf estoit portraict sur l'herbe de la rive  
Entr'eclos à demy, où la peinture vive  
De Castor à un bout de l'œuf se presentoit,  
Et celle de Pollux à l'autre bout estoit. 156  
Au droit de l'estomac, de soye blanche & fine  
Voloit au naturel la semblance d'un Cygne  
Ayant le col si beau & le regard si doux,  
Que chascun eut pensé que Juppiter dessous 160  
Encore aymoît caché, tant l'image portraïtte  
Du Cygne & de Leda, estoit vivement faicte.

(There, Castor and Pollux, the flower of knighthood, gained the cold hospitality of the seashore, one who would have rather spurred on a fine war-horse on the plains of Sparta than be a sailor, the other who would have rather fenced than pull the oar. Right above their heads a twin flame seemed already to be glowing, and broad beams of light to mark the entire top of their fine helmets, helmets modelled by elegant design on the same image as the oval shell which each of them had on his head when the egg hatched them out from its two ends. A purple robe, shimmering like fire, hung from their necks down to the soles of their feet, which their mother Leda had honored her sons with as an exquisite gift on their departure, a needlewoman, knotting together in a secret way slender threads of gold with threads of silk. In the middle of the robe could be seen Taygetus, where the horse Cillar was browsing amidst flowers, and further down on the edge of this new robe, Eurotas burred along, its stream meandering with long silver twists, with in fine fashion on its banks girls wrestling with boys. An egg was depicted on the grass of the bank, half open, where the lifelike painting of Castor was seen at one end of the egg, and that of Pollux was at the other. To the right of the stomach, in fine white silk, there flew a lifelike image of a swan, with such a beautiful neck and such a sweet

gaze that everyone would have thought that Jupiter was still in love, concealed inside, to such an extent was the portrayal of the swan and Leda vividly executed.)

This passage contains the description of the scene embroidered by their mother Leda on the purple robes which she presented to them on their departure (lines 147–62). Apart from allowing Ronsard to give free rein to his powers of description, the myth of Leda and the swan was important for the allegorical meaning which was associated with it in the Renaissance, in which great significance was attached to the powers of music and poetry. Ronsard had already explored this theme, of course, in the 1550 ode *La Defloration de Lede*.<sup>12</sup> These musical aspects are missing from Ronsard's model for the scene, Valerius Flaccus 1. 429–32, in which, although the swan is present, he is merely there to remind us of the Dioscuri's father. Moreover, Castor and Pollux themselves are not depicted as newly-born infants, but as riding on their horses:

... bis Taygeton silvasque comantes  
struxerat, Eurotan molli bis fuderat auro;  
quemque suos sonipes niveo de stamine portat  
et volat amborum patrius de pectore cycnus.

(... twice she had arranged mount Taygetus and its leafy woods, twice she had displayed the river Eurotas in soft gold thread; each twin is carried by his own steed woven in snow-white thread, and their swan-father flies off from each of their chests.)

Boccaccio had explained Jupiter's transformation into a swan as follows:<sup>13</sup>

The ancients may have made up the story that Jupiter turned into a swan because the swan sings sweetly. It is possible that

<sup>12</sup> I have discussed this poem, with its important visual elements, including the use of the epiphysis, in my article "Ronsard's Erotic Diptych: *Le Ravissement de Cephale* and *La Defloration de Lede*," *French Studies* 47 (1993), 385–403.

<sup>13</sup> See *Genealogie deorum gentilium libri*, ed. Vincenzo Romano, 2 vols. (Bari: Laterza, 1951), book 11, chapter 7, p. 547: "Iovem autem in cignum versum ideo forsitan finxit antiquitas, quia dulce canat cignus, quod possibile est et Iovem fecisse, et sui cantus dulcedine, ut sepe contigisse vidimus, in sui dilectionem atque concupiscentiam Ledam traxisse."

this is what Jupiter did too, and that by the sweetness of his singing he won over Leda for his own pleasure and lust, as we have seen happen frequently.

Later, however, this idea gained a more mystic, Orphic meaning. Paintings of Leda and the swan were quite popular in the first half of the sixteenth century, with versions by Leonardo da Vinci and Rosso, copied from Michelangelo, known in France. Another example is Correggio's painting of c. 1528, which has been discussed by Egon Verheyen. Citing Valeriano's *Ieroglifici* in which Music is depicted by a *putto* surrounded by swans on the bank of a river, and referring to Filippino Lippi's *Allegory of Music* in Berlin, where a swan garlanded with a branch of laurel represents the highest, Apollonian form of music, he writes:<sup>14</sup>

The significance of music in Correggio's *Leda* is demonstrated clearly by the three cupids playing instruments. Two little cupids blow wind instruments whereas a larger cupid plays the harp. This cupid, who is opposed to those with their wind instruments, is stressed . . . and he represents the higher principle of music which does not evoke base lust. . . . Leda and Jupiter are united in celestial love, created by the music of the harp and the song of the (Apollonian) swan.

The divine heroes Castor and Pollux, the benefactors of mankind of whom Ronsard says: "Vous aymez les chansons quand elles sont bien faites" (L. VIII. 326. 757), may thus be seen as the outcome of this unifying, celestial music. Correggio does not portray the offspring of the union, but they are present in Leonardo's depiction of the scene, of which Edgar Wind writes:<sup>15</sup>

. . . the presence in it of the four children of Leda—Castor, Pollux, Helen, and Clytemnestra, issuing pair-wise from the

<sup>14</sup> See "Correggio's *Amori de Giove*," *JWCI* 29 (1966), 160–92, especially pp. 189–90.

<sup>15</sup> See *Pagan Mysteries*, p. 167. In a footnote to this passage (n. 60), Wind adds: "If the union of Discord and Concord, as the Orphic-Neoplatonic 'principle of generation,' is implied in the mystery of Leda, then the theme is, like the figure of the swan, essentially musical, which might explain the iconographical affinity between Leonardo's *Leda* and Filippino Lippi's *Allegory of Music*." See also the discussion of the whole subject of Leda by Carlo Pedretti, *Leonardo: A Study in Chronology and Style* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), 97ff.



eggs—would seem to confirm an ambivalent interpretation of the theme: *concordia* represented by Castor and Pollux, *discordia* by Helen and Clytemnestra.

He concludes that this Orphic union of contraries is basically a musical one. Moreover, Michelangelo's lost painting, according to Wind, almost certainly figured Castor and Pollux along with Helen:<sup>16</sup>

... for if we trust the contemporary engraving made in Italy by Cornelis Bos, which has strong marks of authenticity, two eggs appeared in Michelangelo's painting: one broken, with a pair of twins issuing from it, the other still intact but transparent, showing the outline of a dormant infant, Helen.

Significantly for the passage in Ronsard, both the Leonardo painting and Rosso's copy of the Michelangelo work were in the royal collection at Fontainebleau when Ronsard came to write the hymn.<sup>17</sup>

Ronsard's description of the scene appears to be somewhat eclectic. Taygetus (line 147) and Cyllarus (line 148) were probably suggested by Valerius Flaccus (1. 429 and 426); Eurotas (lines 149–52) also appears in Valerius Flaccus, but in classical literature this river is a constant element in the Leda myth, and in the Ronsard hymn, the poet seems to have Propertius 3. 14. 4 in mind ("inter luctantis nuda puella viros"), compare line 152. The egg on the grass by the bank of the river with Castor and Pollux in either half (lines 153–56) is a specifically pictorial image in the way in which, rather than presenting a general description of the scene, it freezes the actions of the twins. Finally, there is the description of the swan and Leda. The use of "voloit" (line 158, perhaps derived from Valerius Flaccus) seems to imply that the swan is in full flight, but the emphasis immediately shifts to Jupiter's love for Leda and their presence together in lines 160–62. This represents a close-up of the swan (see line 159) and per-

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<sup>16</sup> *Pagan Mysteries*, 169.

<sup>17</sup> See Pedretti, *Leonardo*, 97: "The original was apparently in the collection of the king of France and was last recorded in 1625 when Cassiano dal Pozzo saw it at Fontainebleau." On the Rosso copy of Michelangelo's Leda, see Cecil Gould, *National Gallery Catalogues: The Sixteenth-Century Italian Schools* (London: The National Gallery, 1975), 150–52.



haps depicts the moment when, with wings out stretched, he arrives in Leda's lap, as in the Michelangelo/Rosso painting.

This juxtaposition of the moment of conception and of its result, the Dioscuri, emphasizes the beneficent effects of music represented, as we have seen, by the swan. In Francesco Colonna's *Poliphili hypnerotomachia* of 1499, the hero sees a triumphal procession with Leda and the swan as the central feature, but containing also Apollo and the nine Muses, again pointing to the poetic associations of the myth. Amongst other scenes portrayed on the chariot, one depicts "a striking matron who had given birth to two eggs . . . from which a little flame emerged from one, and two most splendid stars from the other egg" (fig. 25).<sup>18</sup> In Ronsard too the divine twins are particular benefactors of mankind, a concept evoked by the two stars which accompany them (lines 134–35) and by the *pilei* which they wear (lines 137–40). Like the poet, they act as mediators between the sub-lunar and the divine worlds, for according to one legend mentioned by Ronsard and, as we have seen, alluded to in the 1549 entry into Paris of Henry II, they share a partial immortality.<sup>19</sup>

If several of these themes are only implicit in the first mythological hymn, they are expounded explicitly at the start of the second hymn, dedicated to the Dioscuri. Their individual properties are described by Ronsard (lines 45–48) who then goes on to illustrate this in a hypotyposis which graphically presents the ways in which they help soldiers in battle and sailors in peril on the sea (lines 49–78). The poet then addresses them directly, emphasizing their particular connections with poetry and music:

O tous deux le secours, ô tous deus le support  
De ceulx, qui dans les flotz n'attendent que la mort,  
Chantres victorieux, Chevaliers & Poëtes,  
Touts deux également mes chers amys vous estes.  
(lines 79–82)

<sup>18</sup> The work is available in a facsimile edition, introduced by George D. Painter (London: Eugrammia Press, 1963). On the subject of their *pilei*, Wind writes, *Pagan Mysteries*, 170, n. 69: "The two halves of the cosmic egg . . . represent the celestial and the subterranean 'hemispheres' which were identified with the caps or *pilei* worn by Castor and Pollux."

<sup>19</sup> See the discussion concerning fig. 21 in this chapter.

(Oh you two who are the aid, oh you two who are the assistance of those who expect only death in the waves, victorious bards, horsemen and poets, you are both equally my dear friends.)

The greater part of the hymn is devoted to the Argonautic story concerning the confrontation between Pollux and Amycus (lines 87–574), and to the abduction of the Leucippides and Castor's subsequent fight with Lyncaeus (lines 575–750). Whereas it is easy to see why Ronsard makes use of the Amycus story, where Pollux is shown as a considerable benefactor of mankind in killing the boastful and brutish giant Amycus, a classical version of David and Goliath in which Pollux, like David, combines the attributes of valor and music, the rather less edifying account of the twins' abduction of the daughters of Leucippus is one of those shocking myths likely to encapsulate a mystery.

In the case of the first incident, it seems quite probable that Ronsard had the biblical passage in 1 Samuel 17 in mind when writing this section. Apart from the fact that there are natural affinities between the combats of Pollux and Amycus, and David and Goliath, Ronsard does go out of his way to underline them in some of the details he includes, as in lines 283–86:

Si de vostre bon gré vous abordéz icy  
Pour joster contre moy, approchez, voy me-cy:  
Le plus brave de vous entre ses mains empoigne  
Les armes seul à seul, & se mette en besogne

(If you draw near out of your own free will to spar against me, come near, here I am: let the bravest amongst you grasp his weapons in his hands in single combat, and set to work)

and Goliath's words in 1 Samuel 17. 8:

Quare venistis parati ad praelium? Numquid ego non sum Philisthaeus, et vos servi Saul? Eligite ex vobis virum, et descendat ad singulare certamen.

Like the Philistines, Ronsard's Amycus specifically rejects the authority of God:

Des autres nations Jupiter soit le maistre,  
En soit l'espouventail, je ne le veulx congnoistre,  
Je suis mon Jupiter. . . . (lines 305–7)

(Let Jupiter be master of the other nations, let him be their bog-eyman, I will not recognize him; I am my own Jupiter. . .)

However, Pollux, like David, feels confident that with God's help he can win, compare lines 323-25: "... sentant bien en son cœur / Qu'un filz de Jupiter devoit estre vainqueur / Sur celluy de Neptun" ("feeling clearly in his heart that a son of Jupiter must prevail over Neptune's son"), and 1 Samuel 17. 37: "Dominus qui eripuit me de manu leonis et de manu ursi, ipse me liberabit de manu Philisthaei huius." Both Amycus and Goliath are contemptuous of their adversaries; compare lines 343-44: "... ains douillette la peau, / Les yeux serains & doux, le teint vermeil & beau" ("but his skin [was] soft, his eyes clear and gentle, his complexion ruddy and beautiful"), and 1 Samuel 17. 42: "Cumque inspexisset Philisthaeus, et vidisset David, despexit eum. Erat enim adolescens: rufus, et pulcher aspectu." When the battle is over, the heads of both Amycus and Goliath are prominently displayed. Thus, Pollux in this story would stand for the pious warrior poet who, despite his youthful appearance, is valiant in his defense of king and country (represented by Jason and his followers), and of the true religion. In addition, there is also a close iconographical link with Virgil's story of the fight between the gigantic Dares and the aged Entellus in *Aeneid* 5. 362-484 (fig. 26).<sup>20</sup>

The moral of the second story is not so obvious. Of Ronsard's chief source, Theocritus, *Idyll* 22, A. S. F. Gow writes:<sup>21</sup>

Theocritus seems to go out of his way to place the Dioscuri in an unfavorable light. He insists that they were cousins to the Apharidae (170, 200) though not all authorities made them so; he makes the Leucippides the cause of the quarrel, so securing that the Dioscuri shall appear as aggressors. . . ; he needlessly makes the Leucippides the affianced brides of the Apharidae; he states, as does no other authority, that the Dioscuri have used fraud as well as force in abducting them.

Almost all these objections can also be made against Ronsard's hand-

<sup>20</sup> On this connection, see Marie-Madeleine Fontaine, "Stories beyond Words," in *The French Renaissance in Prints*, 63-64.

<sup>21</sup> *Theocritus: Edited with a Translation and Commentary*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), 2. 383-85.



ling of the story. In addition, to make matters worse, the Apharidae had been presented in the first mythological hymn as Castor and Pollux's companions on board the Argo: "Là, print rivage Idas, & son frere Lyncée" ("Idas and his brother Lynceus came ashore there," L. VIII. 260. 81). However, as Jean Seznec points out in connection with the reliefs of the first century AD Porta maggiore basilica in Rome: "the rape of Ganymede by Jupiter's eagle and that of the daughters of Leucippus by the Dioscuri typify the ascent of the soul to immortality."<sup>22</sup>

Although this myth was not particularly popular amongst artists and poets in the Renaissance, it figured very prominently as a motif on Roman sarcophagi, a number of which were known in the sixteenth century. In his work on Roman funerary symbolism, Franz Cumont comments that "ce rapt était devenu un des sujets de prédilection de la sculpture funéraire," and that its popularity would be difficult to explain without bearing in mind the Dioscuri's symbolic meaning:<sup>23</sup>

But all becomes clear if we remember that the Dioscuri are a personification of the sky, for in the first place the sky, as we have seen, was thought of as the author of men's destinies, and nothing is more frequent amongst the Romans than the idea that mortals are carried off by the *Fata*. . . . The Dioscuri appeared to be all the more meant to fulfil the role of psychopomp in that they were considered, as is well known, as savior gods *par excellence*.

It seems more than likely, therefore, that Ronsard was using the myth in this way in the second part of the hymn, and that the references to the tomb of Aphareus taken from Theocritus 22. 141 take on a symbolic meaning in lines 587–89:

Ja, desja vous estiez avec elles venus,  
Jusque au bord du tombeau, quand vous fustes congnus  
Par les deux freres. . . .

(You had already arrived with them beside the tomb, when you were recognized by the two brothers. . . .)

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<sup>22</sup> See Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, 105, and also Franz Cumont, *Recherches sur le symbolisme funéraire des Romains* (Paris, 1942), 99–103.

<sup>23</sup> *Recherches sur le symbolisme funéraire*, 101.



The battle between the Dioscuri and the Apharidae can be seen as a struggle between celestial and profane love. The Leucippides may well believe that they prefer earthly love, as Lyncée claims (lines 603–6):

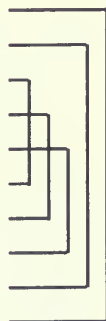
Voy-les là toutes deux! demandez leur pour voyr  
 Lesquelz en mariage elles veulent avoir,  
 Vous voirez qu'envers nous s'inclinent leurs pensées,  
 Comme à nous par serment des long temps fiencées.

(There they both are! Ask them to find out which of us they want to have in marriage; you will see that their inclinations are towards us, in as much as they have been betrothed to us for a long time.)

The Dioscuri, however, know what is best for them; and after a closely-fought battle in which Castor kills Lyncée, Idas, the remaining brother, is killed by a thunderbolt sent by Jupiter himself when he tries to avenge his brother's death. In his valediction to the Dioscuri immediately after this (lines 751 to the end), Ronsard addresses them specifically as lovers and protectors of poetry and poets. The allegorical meaning would therefore seem to be that it is poetry in association with celestial love that can lead the souls of mortals to heaven.

As is clear from this discussion, the structure of this hymn is slightly more complex than that of the Calais and Zetes poem, largely because the twins are celebrated separately, whereas Calais and Zetes are celebrated together in the story concerning the Harpies. There is the same ring pattern for the opening and closing sections, while the central narrative sections are arranged on the principle of *imbrication*, the interlocking ring pattern.

- 1–44 Dedication to Gaspard de Coligny; introduction of Dioscuri
- 45–86 Address to Castor & Pollux and description of their attributes
- 87–254 Arrival of Argo and introduction of Amycus
- 255–414 Amycus challenges Argonauts and Pollux accepts
- 415–574 The fight and death of Amycus
- 575–594 Introduction of Castor's exploits
- 595–650 Lyncée's words of reconciliation
- 651–750 The fight and death of Idas
- 751–770 Valediction to Castor and Pollux
- 771–784 Prayers to Dioscuri for safety of Gaspard de Coligny



The internal logic of this pattern, which in the central narrative sections sets up a whole series of parallels, offers a stark contrast with the literal reading of the hymn, thus pointing to the necessity of an allegorical understanding of the events surrounding Castor and the Apharidae. This contrast is particularly striking when we compare Amycus' speech (lines 283–314) with its gratuitous violence and blasphemous threats:<sup>24</sup>

*Les larmes, ny les vœux, ny les humbles prieres,*  
*Ny les droictz d'hostellage, icy ne servent guieres,*  
*Icy lon ne flechist noz cœurs audacièux*  
 Pour nous prescher en vain la justice des Dieux:  
*Des autres nations Jupiter soit le maistre,*  
 En soit l'espoventail, je ne le veulx congnoistre,  
 Je suis mon Jupiter & ma main avec moy  
 Porte (comme je veux) la justice et la loy.

(lines 301–8)

(Neither tears, nor prayers, nor humble supplications, nor the rights of hospitality are of any use here; here our bold hearts cannot be swayed by preaching to us in vain the justice of the gods. Let Jupiter be master of the other nations, let him be their bogeyman, I will not recognize him; I am my own Jupiter, and my hand brings justice and the law with me, as I will.)

and Lyncée's words (lines 595–650), which put the Dioscuri clearly in the wrong, since they are the very embodiment of reasonableness:

*Ces filles, qu'à grand tort vous emmenez, sont nostres,*  
 Homme ne les scauroit sans mentir dire vostres,  
 Long temps a que *leur pere a juré par sa foy*  
*En femmes les donner à mon frere & à moy:*  
 Qui plus est, je scay bien que les filles s'en deullent,  
 Et que pour leurs mariz nullement ne vous veullent.

(lines 597–602)

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<sup>24</sup> In the following two quotations, the sections in italics represent translations from the original Greek text; the sections in roman type are what Ronsard has added.

(These girls, whom you are completely wrong to carry off, belong to us; nobody can say without lying that they belong to you; long ago their father swore by his troth to marry them to my brother and myself. What is more, I know full well that the girls are distressed by this, and that they have no desire to have you as their husbands.)

The narrator's intervention at the end of the second incident (lines 747-8) does nothing to mitigate the contrast: "... ainsi en prent à ceulx / Qui veulent quereler à gens plus vaillans qu'eulx" ("This is what happens to those who insist on picking a quarrel with people more valiant than themselves").

In the *Hymne de Calais, et de Zetes*, the Apharidae were introduced as follows:

Là, print rivage Idas, & son frere Lyncée,  
Qui souvent de ses yeux la terre avoit percée,  
De ses yeus qui voyoyent, tant ils furent aigus,  
Les Manes des enfers & les Dieux de lassus.

(L. VIII. 260. 81-84)

(Idas and his brother Lynceus came ashore there, the latter who had often penetrated the earth with his eyes, which were so sharp that they could see the shades of hell and the gods of the Underworld.)

The theme of death and the underworld is picked up when they are reintroduced in the following hymn:

Tous deux [viz., Castor and Pollux] jusqu'au tumbeau du  
vieillard Apharée  
Vous fustes poursuiviz par Idas, & Lyncée. ...

(lines 582-83)

(You were both pursued to the tomb of old Aphareus by Idas and Lynceus. ...)

So, as well as the struggle between earthly and celestial love, there also seems to be a combat between the earthly forces of death and mortality on the one hand (Lyncée's knowledge is of the chthonic powers), and the forces of heaven and immortality on the other (Castor and Pollux representing, as we have already noted, the two hemi-

spheres of the heavens). In addition to echoing the theomachia of the *Hymne de l'Eternité*, this theme continues the more worldly conflicts contained in the mythological hymns. Jupiter's intervention to save Castor from Idas marks, perhaps, the final victory of poetry, represented by the poet demigod, over the plastic arts, denoted by the marble pillar:

Idas tout forcené de voyr son frere mort,  
Arracha du sepulchre avec un grand effort  
Un pillier faict de marbre, & marchoit en colere  
A grands pas, pour tuer le meurtrier de son frere,  
Mais Jupiter d'en hault sa race deffendit ...

.....

La flamme en petillant l'estomac environne  
D'Idas, qui tient encor en ses mains la coulonne,  
Brunché mort sur la tombe. ...

(lines 735-39, 745-47)

(Idas, who was quite beside himself at seeing his brother dead, pulled from the tomb with great effort a marble pillar, and was striding along wrathfully to kill his brother's murderer, but Jupiter from above defended his progeny. ... With a crackle, the flame encompasses the stomach of Idas while he is still holding the column in his hands, having fallen down dead on the tomb. ...)

If Ronsard is at pains to point to the symbolic nature of the Dioscuri in narrating these events, in his descriptive passages he appears to choose imagery which emphasizes the meteorological aspects of the twins. For example, after Lyncée has finished speaking before the fight, the anger of Castor and Pollux is described in the following terms:

Lors les Freres jumeaux fachéz d'un tel langage  
Murmuroient en leurs dens, comme faict le cordage,  
Les voilles, & l'entenne, & le mast, quand le vent  
Commence peu à peu à soupirer d'avant  
Les postes messagers de sa proche venue,  
Qui font bruire la rive, & cresser l'eau chenüe:  
De la simple parolle ilz sont venuz aux cris,



Des cris à la fureur, furieux ilz ont pris  
 Les armes en la main, comme un vent qui à peine  
 A son commencement un petit bruit demeine,  
 Puis le bruit se redouble, & fait ruer après  
 (Esclattéz par tronçons) les membres des forés,  
 Esbranle les Rochers, & onde dessus onde  
 Renverse jusqu'au Ciel la grande Mer profonde.

(lines 653-66)

(Then the twins, angered at such words, murmured between clenched teeth, like the sheets, sails, yard, and mast when the wind gradually begins to sigh before the messengers bringing news of its imminent arrival, causing the shore to rustle and the white water to ripple; from simple words they proceeded to shouting; from shouting to fury, furiously did they take up arms, like a wind which gently to begin with stirs up a small noise, then the noise redoubles, and brings crashing down in its wake the limbs of the forest, shattered into pieces, shakes the rocks, and flings up, wave upon wave, the great, deep sea skywards.)

The two similes here, which are perhaps an expansion of a comparison used by Virgil in the *Aeneid* (7. 528-30), conjure up quite graphically first the beginnings of a storm, when the ship's rigging begins to make a noise in the wind and the water becomes choppy, and secondly the full violence of a storm at sea. Moreover, it is a meteorological intervention, Jupiter's thunderbolt, that puts an end to the conflict:

Mais Jupiter d'en hault sa race deffendit,  
 Qui dedans une nue horrible descendit,  
 Et se courbant le corps, haulsa la main armée  
 D'une vapeur souffreuse en l'air toute alumée,  
 Puy sur le chef d'Idas sa tempeste eslança,  
 Qui d'un feu prompt & vif tout le corps luy passa.

(lines 739-44)

(But Jupiter from above defended his progeny, descending in an awful cloud; bending his body, he raised his hand which was armed with sulphurous vapor, blazing in the air, then hurled his tempest down on the head of Idas, which passed through the whole of his body with a nimble, swift fire.)

In the earlier fight with Amycus, Ronsard indicates that the giant is the son of the sea god Neptune and is devoted to him (cf. lines 140–41, 203–4, 323–25), while Pollux is the sky god Jupiter's son:

Mais Pollux davant tous avec un grand murmure  
Du peuple s'esleva, sentant bien en son cœur  
Qu'un filz de Jupiter devoit estre vainqueur  
Sur celluy de Neptun. . . . (lines 322–25)

(But Pollux rose up before everyone with a loud murmur from the crowd, feeling clearly in his heart that a son of Jupiter must prevail over Neptune's son. . . .)

As is so often the case in Ronsard's poetry, a single reading of these poems is extremely limiting. In addition to the literal meaning, we can find evidence for a physical interpretation (the Harpies = the winds, Castor and Pollux's fights = storms); an historical interpretation (Jason = Henry II, Calais and Zetes, and Castor and Pollux = various nobles from the royal court); and a philosophical interpretation (Calais and Zetes represent the ascent of the soul heavenwards in search of Truth, inspired by the Apollonian Phineus; Castor and Pollux embody Apollonian harmony, overcoming the chthonic forces of death and leading others to Truth and immortality). The descriptive sections and the use of Homeric similes all contribute to the polysemous nature of the mythological hymns, creating enjoyment on a number of different levels.<sup>25</sup>

Ronsard in inspired mood in the hymns comes over as an authoritative, confident *vates*, but although the fundamental message of the two closing poems of the collection is similar, the poetic tone is rather different. In the long *Epistre à tresillustre prince Charles, Cardinal de Lorraine*, disappointment and disillusionment, especially with Henry II, are evident, despite the gratitude he expresses towards the cardinal. Nevertheless, at times Ronsard does assume a more didactic air, echoing some of the ideas in the preceding three hymns.

The impermanent nature of architecture as a monument to patrons is emphasized, notably in lines 81–118, especially the opening few lines:

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<sup>25</sup> On the different types of allegorical interpretation commonly found in the Renaissance, see my article "Conrad Gesner et le fabuleux manteau," 308.

C'est peu de cas aussi de bastir jusque aux Cieulx,  
 Des Palais eslevez d'un front ambitieux,  
 Qui ne servent de rien que de pompeuse montre,  
 Qui ne peuvent durer (tant soient fortz) alencontre  
 De la fuitte du temps. . . .

(lines 81-85)

(It is also of little store to erect as far as the heavens palaces which are raised up ambitiously, serving no purpose other than inflated ostentation, unable to endure, however strong they are, against the flight of time. . . )

The message is later applied specifically to the cardinal's grotto at Meudon, inferior as a monument to the renown he will receive for his generosity towards Dorat (lines 238-44). The poet's ability to preserve patrons from oblivion is a recurring theme of the *Epistre*, as in lines 101-6, and the closing lines 532-36. Although much of the poem is either admonitory or sycophantic or plangent in nature, it is lightened by anecdotal elements (lines 265-304, 317-76), containing extended similes which increase our interest in the text (lines 270-84, 317-30).

The concluding *Elégie à Chretophle de Choiseul, abbé de Mureaux* includes an attack on incompetent, uninspired poets, and warm praise of Belleau's translation of the *Anacreontea*. It finishes, quite appropriately, on the theme of the enduring fame of poetry as compared with the mutability of human fortunes:

. . . car cecy peut durer  
 Ferme contre le temps, & la richesse humaine  
 Ondoyante s'enfuit comme le temps l'enmeine  
 Errant puis çà puis là, sans arrest ny sejour,  
 Et ce present mettra ton beau renom au jour,  
 Sans jamais s'efacer, pour revivre par gloire  
 Autant qu'Anacreon a vescu par memoire.

(lines 112-18)

(. . . for this can endure steadfastly against time, and human wealth flows away as time carries it along, meandering here and there without rest or respite, and this gift will illuminate your fine renown, without ever fading, to live again in glory as much as Anacreon has lived on in memory.)

Despite the pessimistic message of the collection, the three hymns which make up the *Second Livre des Hymnes* are amongst Ronsard's finest achievements in the realm of grand poetry. The sustained elevation of tone, allusiveness, and creative use of myth provide an example of poetry which could rival the grandest projects of contemporary artists in France. The collection also marks a distinct change in terms of its predominant symbolism, for if the 1555 collection was characterized by didactic symbolism to convey a Neo-Platonic message, there is a far greater element of Neo-Platonic imagery in the 1556 collection, leading to a multi-layered and ultimately more satisfying poetic message.

In particular, the choice of the central theme, the *Argonautica*, is an extremely fruitful one. From the poetic point of view, the prominent position of Orpheus amongst the heroes of the Argo, as well as the existence of fragments of an *Argonautica* poem attributed to Orpheus, invest this myth above all others with a strong poetic authority, allowing the author to emphasize repeatedly the vital function of the poet in society. Secondly, the Argonauts themselves are a powerful image of French society, offering numerous parallels between mythological figures and prominent members of the court, in line with much of the popular iconography of the period. The idea of a quest, as well as the dangers inherent in it, also offers a fertile parallel to contemporary events. Finally, the fact that there are so many points of contact between the story of the Argo and the epics of Homer and Virgil adds to the allusive qualities of the poetry.

The two narrative hymns form, then, a vast diptych, with numerous points of comparison. Unity of theme is guaranteed not only by their shared mythological background but also by the nature of the heroes of each of the hymns: in each case, twin brothers working together in harmony. The similar structures of the hymns, and the cross references (for example, the Castor and Pollux ecphrasis in the first of the hymns) further underline this unity. At the same time, elevation of style is reinforced by the decorative qualities of the poems, found in their vivid descriptions, extended similes, and abundance of detail. If the mythological hymns may be thought of as a diptych, the *Hymne de l'Eternité*, with its magnificent vision of the translunar world, inevitably suggests a frescoed dome. Nevertheless,



in its precarious equilibrium, it echoes the battles that take place in the realm of nature, whether these are to be seen in meteorological, mythical, or historical terms.

In the course of composing these hymns, Ronsard appears to have developed a new, far more authoritative poetic voice. However, as is well known, he was unsuccessful in attracting from Henry II the patronage he needed for the *Franciade*, and the next few years see him more concerned with arranging his poetry into the first collective edition than with writing new compositions. Nevertheless, 1559 saw the publication of two new examples of the hymn genre, both, in fact, dedicated to the cardinal de Lorraine and partly fulfilling Ronsard's promise to the prelate in the *Epistre* (L. VIII. 349–50. 521–36). *L'Hymne de tresillustre prince Charles cardinal de Lorraine* (L. IX. 29–72) and the *Suyte de l'Hymne de tres-illustre Prince Charles cardinal de Lorraine* (L. IX. 145–53) appeared as separate *plaquettes*, and took their places in the collective edition of the *Hymnes* in 1560.

Their composition came at a time when, as Michel Dassonville demonstrates, the Guise family was out of favor with Henry II,<sup>26</sup> and although modern readers inevitably find the interminable flattery of the cardinal and the self-abasement of the poet hard to stomach, Ronsard is, perhaps, making a point in these poems. It is interesting, in particular, to contrast the *Hymne de tresillustre prince Charles cardinal de Lorraine* with the 1555 hymn addressed to Henry II. We saw in the previous chapter that Ronsard concentrated almost exclusively on the martial feats of the king, while at the same time condemning war. However, with the cardinal de Lorraine, the poet has a more fertile topic in his subject's eloquence, and as Dassonville remarks:

Although most of the praises heaped on Charles de Lorraine may seem undeserved, it is useful to notice that Ronsard lingered over the celebration of the least controversial of all his patron's gifts. Almost a third of the hymn [lines 179–410]

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<sup>26</sup> See Michel Dassonville, *Ronsard: Étude historique et littéraire*, vol. 4, *Grandeurs et servitudes* (Geneva: Droz, 1985), 41–42. For further details on the background to Ronsard's compositions at this time, see Francis Higman, "Ronsard's Political and Polemical Poetry," in *Ronsard the Poet*, 241–85.

describes, analyzes, and illustrates the cardinal's eloquence, which apparently made Théodore de Bèze himself envious.<sup>27</sup>

In broader terms, Ronsard suggests that it is only thanks to the cardinal that literature and the arts have any real place during Henry II's reign. Before his advent:

Des le commencement que Dieu mist la Couronne  
Sur le chef de Henry, il n'y avoit personne  
Qui triste ne pleurast les lettres & les ars,  
Tout l'honneur se donnoit à Bellonne & à Mars,  
La Muse estoit sans grace, & Phebus contre terre  
Gisoit avec sa harpe accablé de la guerre.

(L. IX. 67-68. 709-14)

(From the moment when God placed the crown on Henry's head, there was nobody who did not sadly weep for literature and the arts; Bellona and Mars received all the honor, the Muse was without favor, and Phoebus was prostrate on the ground with his harp, overcome by war.)

However, thanks to the cardinal's patronage of Michel de l'Hospital, Du Bellay, Pierre Pascal, Dorat, and Baïf, a more cultivated age has dawned in France.

In the course of the hymn, the cardinal is compared to a whole host of mythological gods and heroes, including Hercules and Mercury. These two figures are perhaps suggested by the cardinal's emblem, which consisted of a pyramid or obelisk surrounded by ivy. In his *Icones* of the heroes of France, Jodelle had included the following verses:<sup>28</sup>

Supposito talem genio fers Carole molem,  
Qualis Atlantaeis colloque humerisque recumbit,  
Non Athlas tamen ipse, nepos sed Atlanticus ipse.

(Charles, you bear upon your spirit the weight of so great a mass of care as would fall from the neck and shoulders of

<sup>27</sup> *Grandeurs et servitudes*, 47.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Icones* 39, p. 177 of the Graham and McAllister Johnson edition of *Le Recueil des inscriptions*.

Atlas himself; but you yourself are not Atlas, but Atlas's grandson [i.e., Hermes, associated with good fortune].)

The first point is made by Ronsard in lines 125–44 of the hymn, except that Atlas is replaced here by Hercules:

... Comme Hercule le grand  
Soustint de ses grands bras tout ce monde qui pend, ...

.....  
En ce point tu soutins presque dès ton enfance,  
Non des bras mais d'esprit, les affaires de France,  
Fardeau gros & pesant, où l'on peut voir combien  
Ton esprit est subtil à le regir si bien.

(lines 127–28, 141–44)

(As the great Hercules supported with his mighty arms the whole of this suspended universe, ... in the same way you supported from childhood onwards, not with your arms but with your mind, the affairs of France, a great and weighty burden, where one can see how clever your mind is in governing it so well.)

Similarly, later on in the poem, Charles is represented as the god Mercury:

Adonc toy poursuyvant les parolles du Roy,  
Vestu d'un rouge habit qui flamboit dessus toy  
A rays etincellants, comme on voit une estoille  
Soubz une nuit d'yver qui a forcé le voile  
De la nue empeschante, & des rays esclattans  
Descouvre aux mariniers les signes du beau temps:  
Ainsi tu reluisois d'habis & de visage,  
Portant de sur le front de Mercure l'image,  
Quand son chapeau ailé, & ses talons ailez,  
Et son baston serré de serpens accollez,  
Le soustiennent par l'air, & d'une longue fuitte,  
Legier, se va planter dessus un exercite,  
Ou sur une cité, & d'une haute voix  
Anonce son message aux peuples & aux Roys:  
Le cœur des Roys fremist, & la tourbe assemblée



Oyant la voix du Dieu fremist toute troublée,  
 Ferme sans remuer ny les yeux ny les pas:  
 Ainsi tu esbranlois tout le cœur des estas,  
 Qui ne se remuoient tant soit peu de leurs places  
 Oyant tes motz sortis de la bouche des Graces.

(lines 383–402)

(Then as you followed the king's words, dressed in a red robe which flamed on you with sparkling beams, just as one sees a star on a winter's night which has broken through the veil of the obscuring cloud and reveals to sailors with shining beams the portents of fine weather; just so did you shine in dress and countenance, bearing the outward appearance of Mercury, when his winged hat and winged heels and his wand encircled with entwined snakes support him in the air, and lightly in a long flight he settles above an army or over a city and in a loud voice announces his message to the peoples and the kings; the kings' hearts tremble and the assembled masses, hearing the voice of the god, tremble, all disturbed, immobile, without moving eyes or feet; just so did you shake the hearts of the Estates, who did not move an inch from their seats, on hearing your words, which had originated in the mouths of the Graces.)

Mercury's travelling hat, the *petasus*, resembles, of course, a cardinal's hat, thus providing a visual link between the two.

In fact, the traditional attributes of Mercury and the myths which concern him sum up the qualities which Ronsard singles out in the cardinal, for the god is associated with reason, cunning, eloquence, the invention of the lyre, and with being a messenger figure. In the course of the hymn, Ronsard illustrates all of these functions: reason (lines 125–78), cunning (lines 179–208), eloquence as a messenger (lines 209–356), all coming together in the passage we have just cited. In addition to all this, the cardinal relaxes by writing poetry and playing the lyre: “Quelque fois il te plaist pour l'esprit defacher / Du luc au ventre creux les languettes toucher” (“Sometimes you choose to relax your mind by playing on the strings of the round-bellied lute,” lines 435–36).<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> On the nature of the instrument referred to as *luc* or *lyre* by Ronsard, see in chap. 3 the discussion of the poem *A Monsieur de Belot*.



There can be little doubt that this hymn is essentially a panegyric, and as such, it takes as its models the pseudo-Tibullan *Panegyricus Messalae* and the anonymous *Laus Pisonis*. Much of the detail it contains is closely based, as Laumonier indicates, upon these texts, and it follows the usual *topoi* involved in the genre: praise of the subject's ancestors (effected in the form of a *praeteritio*, claiming not to do so), the universality of his fame, comparison with gods and heroes, etc. Yet despite the poem's length, its unpromising subject matter, and its flattering tone, it is not without interest, and Ronsard's use of myth to celebrate the cardinal along with the poem's sustained *gravitas* result in a more convincing encomium than the one addressed to Henry II.

If this hymn straddles the panegyric and the hymn genres, the *Suyte de l'Hymne* ... is a kind of postscript, adding congratulations on the successful negotiations which led to the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis, and a request for financial assistance. In terms of this chapter, it is worth noting one of the central images of the poem which presents the cardinal as the pilot of the ship of state, thus coinciding with Jodelle's depiction of him as the pilot of the *Argo* cited above.

Ainsi qu'on voit, quand le ciel veult armer  
L'onde & le vent contre un vaisseau de mer,  
Chacun craignant la fortune commune:  
Un mathelot va redresser la hune,  
L'autre le mast, l'autre la voile, & font  
Tous leur devoir en l'estat où ils sont.  
Mais par sus tous le bon Pilote sage  
Prend le timon, conjecture l'orage,  
Juge du ciel, & d'un œil plein de soing  
Scait éviter les vagues de bien loing:  
Ores à gauche il tourne son navire,  
Ores à dextre en coustoyant le vire,  
Fait grande voile, ou petite, & par art  
Au bord prochain se sauve du hazard.  
Ainsi feis-tu n'aguere' en l'assemblée,  
Qui comme une onde estoit toute troublée  
D'opinions, & de conseils divers,  
Qui çà qui là alloyent tous de travers:  
Seul tu guidois au milieu de la noise

Le gouvernal de la barque François,  
Et tu gardois, comme sage & rusé,  
Que ton Seigneur ne fust point abusé.

(lines 71-92)

(Just as we can see, when the sky determines to arm wave and wind against a vessel, with everyone fearing their shared fate, one sailor goes to set up the crow's nest, another the mast, another the sail, and all carry out their duty in the state in which they find themselves, but above all others the good, wise helmsman takes the rudder, guesses the direction of the storm, judges the sky, and with careful eye knows how to avoid the waves from afar; at one time he turns his ship to the left, at another, hugging the coast, he steers it to the right, he uses the mainsail or reefs in, and skilfully escapes danger on the nearby shore. Just so did you act recently in the assembly which, like a billow, was all troubled with opinions and different counsels, all going askance in all directions; you alone guided in the midst of the wrangling the helm of the ship of France and, being wise and cunning, you prevented your lord from being deceived.)

The comparison, presented as a vivid hypotyposis, provides a graphic variation on a theme which has underlain much of the imagery of the hymns discussed in this chapter.

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With his failure to attract from either Henry II or the cardinal de Lorraine the patronage which he felt he needed for the *Franciade*, and with the progress of the religious troubles in France, which reached a crisis in the early 1560s, we see Ronsard developing a new poetic voice in the polemical *discours* of 1562-63. Nevertheless, his hieratic voice had not completely deserted him, and 1564 saw the publication of a new collection of hymns, *Les IIII Saisons de l'an*.

## CHAPTER 7

# *The Seasons*

multa videmus enim, certo quae tempore fiunt  
omnibus in rebus.

(Lucretius, 5. 669-70)

**T**he mystery of the changing cycle of the year not surprisingly inspired both artists and poets in the Renaissance. Although individual seasons might be presented in isolation (notably Botticelli's *Primavera*), it was more common for them to be portrayed in a series of paintings, tapestries, sculptures, etc., viewed either in terms of the changing face of the countryside and the resultant variations in country life, or in terms of cosmic changes, presented in mythological or allegorical guise.<sup>1</sup>

Both these traditions existed in classical literature, from which much of the Renaissance iconography of the seasons derived. Hesiod in the *Works and Days* 414-617 depicts the agricultural activities that should be accomplished at various times of the year, while Virgil follows him in the *Georgics*, 1. 204-350, but with rather more poetic embellishment. Lucretius, on the other hand, presents a mythological portrayal of the seasons at 5. 737-47, where they are represented by the presiding deities of Venus, Cupid, Zephyrus, and Flora (spring), Ceres (summer), and Bacchus (autumn). No individual god is assigned to winter.

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<sup>1</sup> On the various traditions in the representation of the seasons, see Tervarent, *Attributs et symboles dans l'art profane*, col. 316, and Raimond van Marle, *Iconographie de l'art profane au moyen âge et à la Renaissance*, 2 vols. (The Hague, 1931), 2, 319-24.

it ver et Venus, et Veneris praenuntius ante  
 pennatus graditur, Zephyri vestigia propter  
 Flora quibus mater praespargens ante viai  
 cuncta coloribus egregiis et odoribus opplet.  
 inde loci sequitur calor aridus et comes una  
 pulvurulenta Ceres et etesia flabra aquilonum.  
 inde autumnus adit, graditur simul Euhius Euan.  
 inde aliae tempestates ventique sequuntur,  
 altitonans Voltumnus et auster fulmine pollens.  
 tandem bruma nives adfert pigrumque rigorem  
 reddit hiemps, sequitur crepitans hanc dentibus algor.

(Spring comes, and Venus, and Venus' winged messenger precedes her, and hard by along the path they will follow mother Flora fills Zephyr's trail with a sprinkling of flowers of outstanding color and scent. Then follows dry heat and along with this dusty Ceres and the annual blasts of the north winds. Then autumn approaches, and at the same time Dionysus. Then other seasons and winds follow: Mount Vultur thundering on high and the south wind potent with lightning. At length mid-winter returns and brings snow and stiffening frost, and there follows tooth-chattering cold.)

Vincenzo Cartari appears to follow this pattern in *Le immagini degli dei*, with the addition of either Vulcan in his forge or Aeolus and the winds to symbolize winter.<sup>2</sup>

Sono anchora le stagioni dell'anno mostrate alle volte in questo modo. Mettesi Venere per la Primavera, Cerere per la Està, per l'Autunno Bacco, e per l'Inuerno talhora Volcano, che sta alla fucina ardente, e talhora i venti con Eolo Re loro, perche questi fanno le tempestà, che nell'Inuerno sono più frequenti che ne gli altri tempi. (p. 52)

(The seasons of the year are at times also shown as follows. Venus stands for spring, Ceres for summer, Bacchus for autumn, and for winter sometimes Vulcan, standing in his fiery

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<sup>2</sup> My quotation is taken from the 1571 edition, printed in Venice, also available in a facsimile edition (New York and London: Garland, 1976).



forge, and sometimes the winds with their king Aeolus, because they create the storms which in winter are more frequent than at other times.)

Cartari also refers to Ovid's hypotyposis in the story of Phaëthon of Apollo surrounded by the personifications of time, including the Seasons (or Horae):

a dextra laevaue Dies et Mensis et Annus  
 Saeculaque et positae spatiis aequalibus Horae  
 Verque novum stabat cinctum florente corona,  
 stabat nuda Aestas et spicea sarta gerebat,  
 stabat et Autumnus calcatis sordidus uvis  
 et glacialis Hiems canos hirsuta capillos.

(*Metamorphoses* 2. 25–30)

(On his right and left are Day and Month and Year and the Centuries, and the Hours placed at equal distances. Young Spring stood there, wearing a crown of flowers, and naked Summer bearing garlands of corn, and Autumn, stained with trodden grapes, and freezing Winter, bristling with white hair.)

The French court at Fontainebleau had its share of seasonal paintings. The ceiling of the Galerie d'Ulysse by Primaticcio had, in the eleventh compartment, Flora, Ceres, Bacchus, and Saturn, while the fifth compartment (symmetrically opposite) contained allegorical personifications of the Horae.<sup>3</sup> Pierre Bontemps produced a fireplace, incorporating in the frame bas-relief sculptures of the seasons and the elements, for Henry II's bedchamber (1555–56), although it now forms part of a composite fireplace in the Salle des gardes du roi.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the Salle de bal, decorated by Primaticcio, also, I believe,

<sup>3</sup> For further details see *La Galerie d'Ulysse à Fontainebleau*, 126–27, for a plan of the ceiling, and 153–54 and 177–81 on the allegorical representation of the seasons. The Horae occupied the central compartment of the ceiling. The authors write: "Il ne s'agit donc pas, comme l'écrit Dimier et comme on le répète toujours, de figures réunies à la voûte par 'fantaisie' mais d'un programme solidement construit: les dieux planétaires, choisis, semble-t-il, pour leur aspect particulièrement bénéfique . . . règlent le cours des astres, la vie des dieux et des héros," 103.

<sup>4</sup> See Jean-Pierre Samoyault, *Fontainebleau: Guide de la visite* (Versailles: Les Éditions d'Art, n.d.), 26.

contains mythological representations of the seasons.<sup>5</sup> Outside Fontainebleau, tapestries depicting the seasons were common (for example, the allegorical representation of summer in a tapestry to be found in the Galerie Nationale de la Tapisserie at Beauvais). Antoine Caron painted his own tribute, the triumphs of the Seasons, of which three paintings survive (winter, spring, and summer).<sup>6</sup>

Representations of the seasons in the visual arts place their emphasis on different aspects of the annual cycle of the year: celestial or earthly variations, beneficent or destructive forces may predominate. In 1563, Ronsard published his own tribute to the changing year in *Les Quatre Saisons de l'an, avecques une Eglogue, une Elegie, l'Adonis et l'Orphée* (Paris, Gabriel Buon). In addition, the *plaquette* contains a *chanson*, *Douce Maistresse, touche...* One aspect of the seasonal hymns which has puzzled Ronsard scholars is the apparent lack of unity in the two accounts of the creation of the Seasons in the *Hymne du Printemps* (L. XII. 31. 63–69) and the *Hymne de l'Esté* (L. XII. 40–41. 101–22), causing commentators such as Chamard and Laumonier to speculate on different times of composition.<sup>7</sup> However, there are a number of shared common elements in the *Hymne du Printemps* and the other seasonal hymns, so that the apparent disre-

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<sup>5</sup> It has been suspected in the past that the seasons were in some way represented (see, Bibliothèque Nationale [Cabinet des estampes], *Primatice [François], Peintures dans le château de Fontainebleau*, accession code Aa.35a); but there exists no thorough-going analysis of the iconography of this room since its restoration. The western half of the room, closest to the musicians' gallery, largely appears to follow the Lucretius/Cartari symbolism: Bacchus as the tutelary god of autumn, Ceres of summer, and Vulcan, preparing Cupid's arrows in his forge, for winter. The exception is the depiction of spring, where it is Apollo, god of harmony as well as the sun, who is presiding, an apt symbol in a ballroom.

<sup>6</sup> See Jean Ehrmann, *Antoine Caron: peintre des fêtes et des massacres* (Paris: Flammarion, 1986), 105–10, on the *Triumphes des Saisons*.

<sup>7</sup> See L. XII. 41. n. 1 for Laumonier's comments, and Henri Chamard, *Histoire de la Pléiade* 4 vols. (Paris, 1939–40), 3: 20, n. 5 for Chamard's. Terence Cave comments helpfully on this problem in *The Cornucopian Text*, 243. The apparent difficulties presented by the seasonal hymns have led scholars like the late Malcolm Smith to see them as historical rather than physical allegories; cf. his article "The Hidden Meaning of Ronsard's *Hymne de l'Hyver*," in *Renaissance Studies in Honor of Isidore Silver: Essays on French Renaissance Literature*, ed. F. S. Brown, *Kentucky Romance Quarterly* 21 (1974) sup. 2, 85–97, where *Hyver* is identified with the Reformed Church. For a different interpretation, see Donald Stone, "The Sense and Significance of Ronsard's Seasonal Hymns," *Symposium* 18 (1964): 321–31.

gard for unity in fact masks, as we shall see, a self-consistent philosophical account. Unity of theme also exists with regard to the other poems in the collection, and in particular the mythological poems *L'Adonis* and *L'Orphée*, even though Ronsard again appears to play this down.

The seasonal hymns follow, as we might expect, the mythological tradition of the iconography of the seasons. At times violent, they present in a series of striking tableaux the origins of the ordered, cyclical process of the year, the eternal *discordia concors* we have already seen in the *Hymne de l'Eternité*, transferred to the sublunar world and marked on the one hand by the *hieros gamos* of a whole series of gods, on the other hand by the *theomachia* of other gods. We see both the beneficent and the more sinister effects which the seasons produce.

It is, of course, no coincidence that Ronsard speaks of the "fabuleux manteau" in this cycle of poems (L. XII. 50. 82), in which philosophical and scientific notions are conveyed in narrative and visual terms, but in such a way as to "deguiser la verité des choses." It is also, perhaps, appropriate that at the start of the Religious Wars, Ronsard should have looked to the battle of cosmic forces for comfort: if life looks grim in the short term, events should be viewed *sub specie aeternitatis*.

In order to understand what is happening in Ronsard's seasonal hymns, it is necessary to bear in mind one essential philosophical distinction made by Plato in the *Timaeus* and which may also lie behind some of the visual representations: the difference between the absolute eternity of the Living Being and its counterpart in the physical universe, Time.<sup>8</sup> Underlying this is the distinction which Plato also makes between Being and Becoming (*Timaeus* 27D–28B). Being is the higher state, and is an attribute of the eternal and unchanging realm of ideas. Becoming, the lower state, belongs to the realm of the senses. But there is a direct correlation between the realm of ideas and the created world so that Aion, the absolute and unchanging Eternity of the realm of ideas, has its likeness Chronos (Time) in the realm of the senses, subject to change and divisible.

Acting as intermediaries between God and man (as we have seen

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<sup>8</sup> See chapter 6.



in chapter 5) is the race of demons. Plato has Diotima speak of Love in such terms in the *Symposium* (202E), where she says of demons:

Being of an intermediate nature, a demon bridges the gap between them [i.e., gods and men], and prevents the universe from falling into two separate halves.

We have noted too that Proclus sees a whole hierarchy of gods and demons (a "golden chain") acting as a link between God and man, and that Ronsard has this hierarchical pattern in mind in *Les Daimons* (L. VIII. 119. 59–64), and in the *Hymne de la Philosophie* (L. VIII. 85–102) where he also refers to the hierarchies of Anges, Daimons, and Herôs.

Bearing these distinctions in mind, let us consider the underlying significance of the first of the seasonal hymns, the *Hymne du Printemps* (L. XII. 27–34). From the beginning, it is clear that we are not dealing with the annual cycle of the year, but with the creation of the world out of primeval chaos ("le discord de la mace premiere," L. XII. 28. 3) through the intervention of Amour and Printemps. Clearly, these gods are in the same chain of being: winged, associated with heat, but occupying different hierarchical spheres in the universe:

L'un vola dans les cueurs, l'autre plus bassement  
S'en vola sur la Terre. . . . (lines 6–7)

(One flew into hearts, the other, lower down, flew off to the Earth. . . .)

Amour, then, represents the creative principle in the celestial world, Printemps the same principle at work in the sublunar world. Both are male gods associated with order, harmony, and fertilization. Female deities, according to Proclus, are associated with separation and giving birth.<sup>9</sup> These ideas are represented pictorially by Ronsard in the hypotyposis of Zephyre and Flore, which conjures up a scene such as that on the right hand of Botticelli's *Primavera*:

Zephyre avoit un reth d'aymant laborieux,  
Si rare & si subtil qu'il decevoit les yeux,

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<sup>9</sup> See *In Timaeum*, 294.



Ouvrage de Vulcan, lequel depuis l'Aurore,  
 Depuis le jour couchant, jusqu'au rivage more,  
 Il tenoit estendu pour prendre cautelement  
 Flore que le Printemps aymoît ardalement.

Or cette Flore estoit une Nympe gentille,  
 Que la Terre conceut pour sa seconde fille,  
 Ses cheveux estoient d'or, annelés & tressés,  
 D'une boucle d'argent ses flancs estoient pressés,  
 Son sein estoit remply d'aimail & de verdure:  
 Un crespé delié luy servoit de vesture,  
 Et portoit dans la main un cofin plain de fleurs  
 Qui naquirent jadis du cristal de ses pleurs. . . .

.....

Toujours la douce Manne & la tendre Rosée  
 (Qui d'un ær plus subtil au ciel est composée)  
 Et la forte Jeunesse au sang chaut & ardaent,  
 Et Amour qui alloit son bel arc debandaent,  
 Et Venus qui estoit de roses bien coiffée,  
 Suyvoient de tous costés Flore la belle Fée.

Un jour qu'elle dansoit Zephyre l'egara,  
 Et tendant ses fillets la print & la serra  
 De rets envelopée, & captive tresbelle  
 Au Printemps la donna, qui languissoit pour elle.

Si tost que le Printemps en ses bras la receut,  
 Femme d'un si grand Dieu, fertile elle conceut  
 Les beautés de la Terre, & sa vive semence  
 Fit soudain retourner tout le monde en enfance.

(lines 9–22, 27–40)

(Zephyrus had a carefully-wrought adamantine net, so fine and delicate that it deceived the eyes, crafted by Vulcan, which he spread out from the orient, from the setting sun, as far as the shores of Africa, cunningly to catch Flora, with whom Spring was passionately in love. Now this Flora was a noble nymph whom Earth conceived as her second daughter: her hair was gold, in ringlets and plaits, her sides were encircled by a silver belt, her breast covered with enamel work and greenery; a loose-fitting veil served as her garment, and she carried in her

hand a basketful of flowers, which had been born from the crystal of her tears. . . . Sweet manna and gentle dew [which is made from thinner air in the sky] and strong, hot and burning-blooded Youth, and Love who was loosing his fine bow, and Venus, beautifully crowned with roses, followed Flora, the beautiful fairy, on all sides. When she was dancing one day, Zephyrus waylaid her, and, spreading out his nets, captured her and enclosed her, all enveloped, in his nets, and gave her, a most beautiful captive, to Spring, who was languishing for her. As soon as Spring received her in his arms, as the wife of such a great god, she fruitfully conceived the beauties of the Earth, and her life-giving seed suddenly brought the whole world back to childhood.)

The description is rich in detail, of both a decorative and a symbolic nature. Flore, with her golden ringlets, basket of flowers, and brightly-colored appearance, is a vivid image of abundance, while at the same time, the "boucle d'argent" and veil suggest a virginal aspect (silver being associated with the moon and chastity; buckles, belts, and veils signifying protection). Her companions, Jeunesse, Amour, and Vénus, as we have seen, are traditionally associated with spring. The net with which Ronsard equips Zephyre represents in visual terms the binding, fertilizing principle which Proclus associates with male gods. In explaining the significance of the chains made by Hephaestus to trap Ares and Aphrodite as they were making love (*Odyssey* 8. 266–366), Proclus compares the unifying force of the net to the bonds Plato mentions in the *Timaeus* (31C) which unite the elements of the universe (*In Rempublicam* 6. 141–43). Zephyre, then, in capturing Flore in his net and uniting her with Printemps fulfils a similar function to that of the demiurge Hephaestus with Ares and Aphrodite (emphasized by Ronsard in attributing the net to Vulcan). The result in both cases is generation in the sublunar world. The effects of Amour, who we have seen is in the same series of deities as Printemps, then manifest themselves throughout the sublunar world in a vision of a Golden Age springtime, reminiscent of Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 1. 107–12) and Virgil (*Eclogues* 4. 28–30).

Alors d'un nouveau chef les bois furent couvers,  
Les prés furent vestus d'habillemens tous verds,  
Les vignes de raisins: les campagnes porterent

Le bled que sans labeur les terres enfanterent,  
 Le doux miel distilla du haut des arbrisseaux,  
 Et le laict savoureux coula par les ruyseaux.

(lines 41-46)

(Then the woods were covered with a new canopy, the meadows were clothed in bright green raiment, the vines with grapes; the fields bore corn which the earth brought forth without travail, sweet honey dripped down from the shrubs, and delicious milk flowed in streams.)

We witness the effects of Amour on animate nature in a passage based, like the section of *La Lyre* where Apollo presides over a scene of sexual activity as he tends Admetus' cattle, on Lucretius' opening address to Venus in book 1 of *De natura rerum*.

However, as in Ovid's account in book 1 of the *Metamorphoses*, the perpetual spring of this Golden Age comes to an end through the intervention of Jupiter. Ovid's account is straightforward:

Iuppiter antiqui contraxit tempora veris  
 perque hiemes aestusque et inaequalis autumnos  
 et breve ver spatiis exegit quattuor annum.

(1. 116-18)

(Jupiter shortened the time of the old spring, and through winter, summer, inconstant autumn and brief spring completed the year in four periods.)

Ronsard mythologizes this event:

Jupiter s'alluma d'une jalouse envye  
 Voyant que le Printemps jouïssoit de sa mye,  
 L'ire le surmonta, puis prenant le cousteau  
 Dont n'aguere il avoit entamé son cerveau,  
 Quant il conceut Pallas la deesse guerriere,  
 Detrancha le Printemps, & sa saison entiere  
 En trois pars divisa.

(lines 63-69)

(Jupiter became incensed with jealous envy when he saw that Spring possessed his beloved; he was overcome by rage, then taking the knife with which, not long since, he had cut open



his brain, when he conceived Pallas, the warrior goddess, he sliced up Spring, and divided his entire season into three parts.)

This apparently spiteful and tyrannical action is mitigated by reference to the former, more positive, use of the knife in the birth of Athena, and although this time Ronsard does not say so, it is, according to Pindar, once again Vulcan who had made the knife (*Olympian Odes*, 7. 35). As a result of this, what appears to be a destructive action in fact leads on to birth and regeneration. Henceforth, the world is maintained in a delicate balance between the opposing forces of the heavens.

The *Hymne du Printemps*, then, can be seen as describing the original creation of the Seasons at the beginning of time. Indeed, in Eusebius' *Praeparatio evangelica*, a distinction is made between two kinds of Seasons or Hours.<sup>10</sup> Porphyry is quoted by Eusebius as saying:

Of the Hours, some are Olympian, belonging to the sun, which also open the gates in the air, and others are earthly, belonging to Demeter, and hold a basket, one symbolic of the flowers of spring, and the other of the wheat-ears of summer.  
(Gifford 114b, Estienne p. 69)

It is the creation of the first kind, the Olympian Hours, that Ronsard is recounting in this hymn, and he goes on to describe their effect upon the heavens:

... Adoncques vint l'Esté  
Qui halla *tout le Ciel* de chaut: & n'eust esté  
Que Junon envoya Iris sa messagere,  
Qui la pluye amassa de son æsle legere,  
Et tempera le feu de moitteuse froideur,  
Le monde fut peri d'une excessive ardeur.  
Après, l'Automne vint chargé de maladies,  
Et l'Hyver qui receut les tempestes hardies

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<sup>10</sup> The translation is that of E. Gifford's edition, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1903). I also give references to the edition by Robert Estienne printed for the Bibliothèque royale (Paris, 1544).



Des vens impetueux qui se boufent si fort  
 Qu'à peine *l'univers* resiste à leur effort,  
 Et couvrent mutins la terre pesle-mesle  
 De pluyes, de glaçons, de neiges, & de gresles.

(lines 69–80, my italics)

(Then came Summer, who scorched all the sky with heat; and had not Juno sent Iris, her messenger, who gathered up the rain with her light wing, and tempered the fire with a damp chill, the world would have perished from excessive heat. Afterwards came Autumn, laden with diseases, and Winter, who received the bold tempests of the headstrong winds, which blow so strongly that the universe is scarcely able to resist their onslaught, and they treacherously covered the earth at random with rain, ice, snow, and hail.)

However, Printemps binds Hyver in a chain, an action which will be repeated by Mercure in the *Hymne de l'Hyver*, and this generative act leads to rebirth on Earth:

D'une chesne de fer deux ou trois fois retorse,  
 Prenant l'Hyver au corps, le garrota par force,  
 Et sans avoir pitié de ce pauvre grison,  
 L'espace de neuf moys le detint en prison.

Ainsi par le Printemps la Terre se fist belle. . .

(lines 91–95)

(With an iron chain, twisted two or three times, taking Winter bodily, he forcibly tied him up, and without taking pity on this poor greybeard, he kept him imprisoned for the space of nine months. Thus, through Spring, the Earth became beautiful. . .)

The description of the creation of the Seasons in the *Hymne de l'Esté* does not cover the same ground, but refers to the earthly Seasons, as opposed to the Olympian Seasons. Indeed, Ronsard emphasizes this by showing the Olympian Seasons acting as servants to Soleil as he unites with Nature, who has grown tired of her inert husband, Temps:

Les Heures, qui estoient du Soleil chambrieres,  
 Apresterent la couche & ne tarderent guieres,

Parfumerent les draps & de mille couleurs  
 Getterent par dessus des bouquets & des fleurs...  
 (lines 101-4)

(The Horae, who were the Sun's chambermaids, prepared the bed and scarcely delayed; they perfumed the sheets and cast on them nosegays and flowers of a thousand hues...)

As a result of this union, the four earthly Seasons are born, introducing the cycle of creation into the sublunar world. Their earthly, inferior nature is emphasized in the hypotyposis which follows. Whereas the Seasons described in the *Hymne du Printemps* are active forces, the earthly Seasons are more passive and subject to imperfection, while nevertheless sharing common characteristics with the Olympian Seasons:

... l'un fut Hermaphrodite,  
 (Le Printemps est son nom) de puissance petite,  
 Entre masle & femelle, inconstant, incertain,  
 Variable en effet du soir au lendemain.  
 L'Esté fut masle entier, ardent, roux, & collere,  
 Estincelant & chault, ressemblant à son pere,  
 Guerrier, prompt, & hardy, toujours en action,  
 Vigoreux, genereux, plain de perfection,  
 Ennemy de repos: l'Autonne fut femelle,  
 Qui n'eut rien de vertu ny de puissance en elle.  
 L'Hyver fut masle aussi, monstrueux & hydeux,  
 Negeux, tourbillonneux, pluvieux & venteux,  
 Perruqué de glaçons, herissé de froidure,  
 Qui fait peur en naissant à sa mere Nature.

(lines 109-22)

(One was hermaphrodite [Spring is his name], of little strength, halfway between male and female, inconstant, uncertain, variable in his effect from one day to the next; Summer was entirely male, hot, red-headed and irritable, sparkling and warm, like his father, warriorlike, nimble and bold, always active, vigorous, noble, full of perfection, the enemy of repose. Autumn was female and contained nothing courageous or powerful. Winter was also male, monstrous and ugly, snow-covered, tornado-like, rainy and windy, with icicles on his

hair, bristling with cold, who terrified Nature his mother at his birth.)

The principle of the golden chain seems to be at work here, with forces and events of the hypercosmic world being reduplicated and reenacted in the encosmic world. This pattern, in fact, is repeated later on in the hymn with the union between Esté (who is singled out in lines 113–14 as particularly resembling his father, Soleil) and Ceres, who follows precisely the conduct of her mother, Nature, in propositioning Esté in order to bring creation to maturity:

Toute chose a sa fin, & tend à quelque but,  
 Le destin l'a voulu, lors que ce Monde fut  
 En ordre comme il est: telle est la convenance  
 De Nature & de Dieu, par fatalle ordonnance:  
 Et pour-ce, s'il te plaist pour espouse m'avoir,  
 Pleine de ta vertu, je feray mon devoir,  
 De meurir les amours de la Terre infeconde,  
 Et de rendre parfait l'imperfait de ce Monde.

(lines 199–206)

(Everything has its own end and tends towards some goal; Fate decreed it so, when this World was ordered as it is now: such is the agreement between Nature and God, according to the commands of Fate. Therefore, if you will take me as your wife, I shall dutifully carry out my task of bringing to maturity the loves of the barren Earth and of bringing to perfection what is imperfect in this World.)

Thus Eternity, Time, Sun, and Summer form a golden chain of male deities, descending to man, and Nature and Ceres are part of a golden chain of female deities. As Eusebius writes (quoting Porphyry):

Demeter in other respects is the same as Rhea, but differs in the fact that she gives birth to Koré by Zeus, that is, she produces the shoot (koros) from the seeds of plants. And on this account her statue is crowned with ears of corn, and poppies are set around her as a symbol of productiveness.

(Gifford 109b, Estienne p. 66)

Ronsard gives the attributes of ears of corn and, more unusually, of poppies to Ceres in the *Hymne de l'Autonne* where she is described

with "Du pavot en la main, des espics sur la teste" (line 310).<sup>11</sup> On different levels in the universe and on different time scales, they act out the same union, which maintains a perpetual cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. For, as Proclus explains, in the encosmic world of Becoming, the immortality of the gods is not an unchanging state, but needs perpetual renewal:

These gods, then, are called "young" in as much as their existence overlaps with the duration of Time, and they are always in a state of becoming, and they have a "perpetually acquired immortality."  
(311, V. 191-92)

This use of attributes to suggest qualities, often based on abstruse philosophical sources, is present in all the extended descriptions in the seasonal hymns. Soleil, for example, is described, after the birth of the earthly Seasons, in all his splendor:

Le Soleil s'en alla, & pendit en escharpe  
Son carquois d'un costé & de l'autre sa harpe,  
Il seignit son baudrier de gemmes sumptueux,  
Il affubla son chef de rayons tortueux,  
Il prist sa dague d'or, ardante de lumiere,  
Et à pied s'en alloit commencer sa carriere....

(lines 129-34)

(The Sun set off, and hung his quiver like a bandolier on one side and his harp on the other; he girded his baldric of magnificent jewels, he decked out his head with twisting rays of light, he took his golden dagger, burning with light, and set off to start his journey on foot...)

Some of his attributes—the quiver and the harp—are those of Apollo, and suggest the piercing rays of the sun and the harmony of Apollo; others—the shining jewels, rays of light, and golden dagger—are from the iconographical point of view more directly related to the sun.

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<sup>11</sup> Demeter was associated with poppies at Eleusis, where the flower is carved along with ears of corn on the *kiste* held on the heads of the caryatids at the porch to the sanctuary; see G. Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 159, pl. 56. I am grateful to Dr Janet Huskinson of Clare Hall for the reference to Mylonas.



However, Ronsard is still describing the time just after the creation of the earthly Seasons, and so we have a pedestrian Sun. To rectify this state of affairs, Nature offers him:

... un char d'excellent œuvre,  
Que le boiteux Vulcan, industrieux manœuvre,  
Forgea de sa main propre. ...

.....

Le timon estoit d'or, & les roües dorées  
Estoient de meint ruby richement honorées,  
Qui deçà qui delà flamboyoyent à l'entour,  
Et remplis de clarté faisoient un autre jour.

(lines 137-39, 145-48)

(... a magnificently wrought chariot, which the lame Vulcan, a diligent craftsman, forged with his own hand. ... The shaft was of gold, and the gilded wheels were richly decorated with numerous rubies, blazing all around in all directions; infused with brightness, they created a second daylight.)

We have already seen that the lame Vulcan represents the creative force in the encosmic world.<sup>12</sup> His chariot, therefore, enables him to exercise his power through the Sun, who in turn works through his own child, *Esté*, in order to complete the process of generation.

In describing the annual process of generation on earth, Ronsard has in mind, of course, the animal model of procreation. However, we should remember that sixteenth-century ideas on reproduction were based upon Aristotle's theories in the *De generatione animalium* (1. 18). Very briefly, this means that male and female each produce *sperma* (seminal fluid and menstrual fluid respectively). Because, according to Aristotle, females are inferior to males, menstrual fluid is composed of inert matter, which requires the dynamic, hot force of the male semen to "concoct" it and thus bring it to perfection. Applying the microcosmic model to the macrocosm, Spring (which Ronsard describes as being hermaphrodite) causes the Earth to produce its own *sperma*, but this cannot on its own come to perfection:

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<sup>12</sup> See above.

Depuis que le Printemps, cette garse virille,  
 Ayme la Terre en vain, la Terre est inutile,  
 Qui ne porte que fleurs, & l'humeur qui l'espoinct,  
 Languist toujours en sceve, & ne se meurist point.

(lines 193-96)

(Ever since Spring, that manly wench, has been in love with the Earth to no avail, the Earth is useless, bearing only flowers, and the humor which goads her continues to languish in the sap, and fails to ripen.)

What is needed is the warm, active *sperma* of Summer ("ardant," "chault," "toujours en action," "ennemy de repos") to "concoct" the *sperma* of the Earth and bring it to perfection:

... l'Esté tout soudain,  
 De sa vive chaleur luy eschaufa le sein.

(lines 211-12)

(... all at once, Summer warmed her womb with his life-giving heat.)

We shall see in the other mythological poems of this collection, and particularly *L'Orphée*, how Ronsard applies these principles to more human situations.

The *Hymne de l'Autonne* has received considerable scholarly attention, not least because of its long preamble on the nature of inspiration and Ronsard's poetic calling.<sup>13</sup> It is, of course, the longest of the seasonal hymns, but has strong thematic links with both the *Hymne de l'Esté* and the *Hymne du Printemps*. In the second of these poems, we have seen that Ronsard writes:

... l'Autonne fut femelle,  
 Qui n'eut rien de vertu ny de puissance en elle

(lines 117-18)

(... Autumn was female and contained nothing courageous or powerful)

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<sup>13</sup> On this aspect of the hymn, see my article "Ronsard and the Theme of Inspiration," in *The Equilibrium of Wit: Essays for Odette de Mourgues*, edited by Peter Bayley and Dorothy Gabe Coleman (Lexington: French Forum, 1982), 62-65.

and indeed, she is presented as such in the hymn dedicated to her: adolescent, but uninterested in love, intent on her childish games. She is told by her wet nurse, who is busy spinning in the sun, of her origins, and sent off to see Auton, the damp south wind associated with autumn, who will convey her to her parents, Nature and Soleil. This association with Auton appears to be a physical allegory to explain the increased incidence of disease in the autumn months, and it is presented by means of a graphic hypotyposis representing Auton's cave:

Son Antre s'estuvoit d'une chaleur croupie,  
Moite, lache, pesante, ocieuse, asoupie,  
Ainsi qu'on voit sortir de la gueulle d'un four  
Une lente chaleur qui estuve le jour.

Là sur un peu de paille à terre estoit couchée  
Une lice aboyant, jusque aux os deséchée.  
Les voisins d'alentour, qui paistre la souloient,  
La vieille Maladie en son nom l'appelloient:  
Elle avoit un grand rang de mamelles tirées,  
Longues comme boyaux, par le bout déchirées,  
Que d'un mufle afamé une angence de maux  
Luy suçoient tout ainsi que petits animaux  
Qu'elle (qui doucement sur sa race se veautre)  
De son col retourné leschoit l'un apres l'autre,  
Pour leur former le corps en autant de façons,  
Qu'on voit dedans la mer de monstrueux poissons,  
De sablons sur la rade, & de fleurs au rivage  
Quand le Printemps nouveau descouvre son visage.

Là comme petits loups les Caterres couvoit,  
Et là, la Fievre quarte & tierce se trouvoit,  
Enfleures, flux de sang, Langueurs, Hydropsies,  
La toux ronge-poumon, Jaunisses, Pleuresies,  
Lenteurs, Pestes, Carbons, tournoyement de cerveau,  
Et Rongnes, dont l'ardeur fait alumer la peau.

(lines 185–208)

(His cave was steaming with stagnant, damp, languishing, heavy, idle, somnolent heat, just as we see emerging from the mouth of an oven a drowsy heat which bathes the day. There, on a little straw on the ground was lying a barking bitch,

dried out to the bones. The neighbors all around, who were accustomed to feeding her, called her by the name of old Disease; she had a long row of elongated teats, as long as entrails, frayed at the ends, and they were being sucked ravenously by a mob of aches and pains, just like little animals, which she, gently sprawling over her offspring, licked in turn with upraised neck, in order to fashion their bodies in as many shapes as we can see monstrous fish in the sea, grains of sand on the road, and flowers on the riverbank when early Spring reveals his face. There she kept warm, just like wolf cubs, Catarrhs, and there could be found quartan and tertian Fevers, Swellings, flows of blood, Langors, Dropsies, lung-nawing Coughs, Jaundices, Pleuresies, Clamminess, Plagues, Carbuncles, dizziness, and the mange, whose heat burns the skin.)

This very vivid description is an excellent example of Ronsard's "mannerist" style of composition. The abundance of grotesque details interrupts the narrative flow while at the same time adding to the reader's understanding of the scene. Later, when Soleil is frightened off his usual course by the unexpected appearance of his daughter, Autonne, and she is chased by the "grands Monstres du Ciel" so that "... elle s'alla cacher au creux de la Ballance" ("she hid in the scales of Libra," line 258) and is protected by Scorpio (lines 259-61), this is again merely a physical explanation, for Libra and Scorpio are the signs of the Zodiac associated with the first two months of autumn.

Autonne next visits the palace of her brother, Printemps. Again, Ronsard describes the scene in a vivid hypotyposis (lines 267-82) in which all the details symbolize aspects of springtime: the phallic pine and cypress trees, the swallows which herald spring, and the swans and doves of Venus. We are also presented with a picture of Zephyre, spreading his net as in the *Hymne du Printemps*:

Il estoit allé voir l'industriel Zephyre,  
Qui tendoit ses fillets, & tendus se retire  
Au beau millieu du ret, à fin d'enveloper  
Flore, quand il la peut en ses neuds atraper.

Ainsi qu'en nos jardins on voit embesongnée  
Des la pointe du jour la ventreuse Arignée,  
Qui quinze ou vingt fillets, comme pour fondement



De sa trame future atache proprement,  
 Puis tournant à l'entour d'une adresse subtile  
 Tantost haut tantost bas des jambes elle file,  
 Et fait de l'un à l'autre un ouvrage gentil,  
 De travers, de biés, noudant tousjours le fil,  
 Puis se plante au millieu de sa toille tendue  
 Pour attraper le ver ou la mouche attendue.  
 Ainsi faisoit Zephyre.

(lines 285-99)

(He had gone to see hard working Zephyrus who was casting his nets, and having cast them, withdraws to the very middle of the net in order to catch Flora, when he can trap her in his knots. Just as we see the full-bellied Spider, working hard from daybreak in our gardens, carefully attaching fifteen or twenty threads as though for the foundation of her future web, then going around them with clever skill, she spins with her legs above and below by turns, and creates from one thread to the next a neat piece of work, continually knotting the thread across and at an angle, then plants herself in the middle of her taut web to catch the expected worm or fly; this is what Zephyrus did.)

Once again, the image of binding is used with reference to springtime activity, although the simile of the spider spinning her web, while recalling the spinning of Autonne's nurse (lines 105-14), may also allude to a passage in the *Timaëus* where Plato attributes to Zeus the words:

For the rest, do you, *weaving mortal to immortal*, make living beings; bring them to birth, feed them, and cause them to grow; and when they fail, receive them back again.<sup>14</sup>

(*Timaëus*, 41D)

Autonne steals from Printemps's palace "ses bouquets & ses fleurs" (line 301), and then proceeds to the palace of Esté, where Ceres is to be seen, adorned, as we have seen, with poppies and ears of corn. Passing through the "basse court" of the palace, where traditional

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<sup>14</sup> We shall return to this passage, which describes the cycle of creation, below.

harvesting activities are described in graphic detail (lines 312–20), Autonne enters the building and steals two rays of the “grands flammes ardantes” belonging to Esté. Armed with these, she goes on to the palace of Nature, an edifice which symbolizes sublunar creation as is suggested, once again, by attributing its embellishment to Vulcan (lines 333–34). A hundred youths and a hundred maidens are busy working on “les semences des choses” in a section that recalls Homer’s description of the cave of the nymphs (*Odyssey* 13. 102–12), a passage which Porphyry sees as an allegory of the cycle of birth, death, and reincarnation.

Because of her destructive sterility, Autonne is ordered by Nature to leave:

Tu perdras tout cela que la bonne froidure  
De l’Hyver germera, tout ce que la verdure  
Du Printemps produira, & tout ce qui croistra  
De mur & de parfait quand l’Esté paroistra,  
Tu feras écouler les cheveux des bocages,  
Chauves seront les boys, sans herbes les rivages  
Par ta main phtinopore, & de sur les humains  
Maligne respenderas mille maux de tes mains.

(lines 361–68)

(You will destroy everything that the good chill of Winter will put forth, everything that the greenery of Spring will produce, and everything ripe and perfect when Summer comes; you will make the hair of the groves fall, the woods will be bald, the riverbanks will lack plants through your destructive hand, and you will evilly spread with your own hands over mankind countless aches and pains.)

The unusual Greek epithet *phtinopore* (“causing to fail,” line 367) provides a clue to Ronsard’s thoughts here. It is undoubtedly an allusion to the same passage of the *Timaeus* (41D) which lies behind the weaving imagery. “And when they fail, receive them back again” in the original Greek text is *καὶ φθίνοντα πάλιν δέχεσθε*. Autonne, then, is the season that completes the cycle of generation, marking both an end and, inevitably in a cycle, also a beginning. And it is this sense that is encapsulated in the mystic union of Autonne with Bacchus, who is an equally ambivalent figure.

Ses yeux estinceloient tout ainsi que chandelles,  
 Ses cheveux luy pendoient plus bas que les esselles,  
 Sa face estoit de vierge, & avoit sur le front  
 Deux petits cornichons comme les chevreaux ont:  
 Ses levres n'estoient point de barbe crespelées,  
 Son corps estoit boufy, ses cuisses potelées.

(lines 373-78)

(His eyes sparkled just like candles, his hair hung down below his armpits, his face had a girlish appearance, and on his forehead were two little horns like those of a kid; his lips had no trace of a curly beard, his body was puffy, his thighs chubby.)

Like Autonne, then, Bacchus is now an androgynous figure, despite his earlier depiction in the *Hinne de Bacus*, but in accordance, as we have seen, with the way Ronsard would later present him in *La Lyre* (L. XV. 383-88). His horns too represent his double nature. Proclus in particular associates Dionysus with palingenesis because of his double nature and because, in Orphic theology, he was himself subject to rebirth, being identified with the bisexual demiurge Phanes who was reborn as the son of Zeus.<sup>15</sup>

As in the *Hinne de Bacus*, the entire description of Bacchus and his train is strongly reminiscent of Renaissance paintings representing Bacchic triumphs such as that of Titian (fig. 20):

Devant ce Roy dansoyent les folles Edonides,  
 Les unes tallonnoient des Pantheres sans brides,  
 Les autres respandoient leurs cheveux sur le dos,  
 Les autres dans la main branloient des javelots,  
 Herissés de l'hierre & de fueilles de vigne:  
 L'une dessous un van sans cadance trepigne.  
 Silene est sur un asne, & comme trop donté  
 De vin, laisse tomber sa teste d'un costé.  
 Les Satyres cornus, les Sylvains pieds-de-chevre  
 Font un bruit d'instrumens, l'un qui enfle sa levre  
 Fait sonner un hauboy, & l'autre tout autour  
 De la brigade fait resonner un tabour. (lines 381-92)

<sup>15</sup> Cf. my article "The *Hymni naturales* of Michael Marullus," 475-82.

(Before this king danced the mad Thracian Bacchantes; some spurred on unbridled panthers, others had their hair streaming down their backs, others wielded in their hands javelins, which bristled with ivy and vine leaves; one is stamping un rhythmically on the ground beneath a winnowing basket. Silenus is mounted on an ass, and, being overcome with wine, lets his head drop to one side. The horned satyrs and the goat-footed Sylvens play on their instruments; one, puffing out his lips, blows on the oboe, and another, all around the troop, beats on a drum.)

The sacred union which results between Bacchus and Autonne marks, then, not a sterile end but a new beginning.

In the final hymn of this collection, we learn in the narrative portion of the poem how Hyver, shortly after his birth, was presented by Mercure to Jupiter and the other gods. Forseeing his monstrous nature, Jupiter casts him out of heaven, as he had done with his son Vulcan, and there ensues a battle between the forces of Hyver and the Olympian gods. After the defeat of Hyver, he is bound up by Sommeil with a "cheine de miel" and returned to face Jupiter, whose wife Junon successfully pleads in favor of the defeated Season. There follows a banquet of all the gods, at the end of which Jupiter announces a new era of harmony, with Hyver taking his place in the cycle of the Seasons. Hypercosmic order is extended to the encosmic world.

Notes in the early editions of this hymn make it clear that the various divine combatants in this gigantomachia represent natural phenomena, and that the story is in essence a physical allegory. Hercule (line 136), we are told, represents the sun, Typhée (line 140) "le vent qui imprime les nues de cent mille façons" (L. XII. 74. n. 4 and n. 5).

Despite obvious connections with the other seasonal hymns, there are also divergences, which can be explained by the difference between encosmic time and hypercosmic time. So although in the *Hymne de l'Esté* the four Seasons appear to be born together, in the *Hymne de l'Hyver* this seems not to be the case:

Le jour que la Nature acoucha de l'Hyver,  
On vit de tous costez tous les Vens arriver  
Les parreins de l'enfant, & le ciel paisle-mesle  
Enfarina les champs de neiges & de gresle.

(lines 81-84)



(On the day Nature gave birth to Winter, all the winds were seen arriving from all quarters, the child's godparents, and the sky scattered the fields at random with snow and hail.)

As in the other seasonal hymns, Ronsard adapts Homeric allegories for his own purposes. Jupiter's casting Hyver out of heaven parallels, as Ronsard does not fail to remind us, his similar act with Vulcan. The explanation for this apparently callous act comes in Proclus' commentary on *Timaëus* 23D:

What is more, that he [Hephaestus] is the creator of all sensible beings is obvious according to the same writers, who say that he fell from Olympus on high down to the earth. . . . He is said "to fall from on high down to the earth" in as much as he extends his forging activity over the whole field of sensible matter. (142-43; 1. 191-92)

Thus, Hyver's parallel fall to Earth is simply a veiled way of showing that Jupiter is sending down winter to the sublunar world. The ensuing battle of the gods and giants is then, of course, an allegory for the contest between the elements during the winter months, which ends in the defeat of Hyver and his troops. Proclus describes myths such as the Gigantomachia as being natural in inspired poets to explain the dualistic nature of the world.<sup>16</sup>

The lengthening of night in the winter months is seen by Ronsard in terms of a favor, granted by Nuit to Jupiter, to allow Mercure to spy on the recalcitrant Season (lines 237-46). Winter was not considered by the Renaissance to be a dead period, but a season when the generative power of spring is being prepared in the secrecy of darkness. This notion lies behind visual portrayals of winter such as that described by Cartari and the Vulcan's forge fresco at Fontainebleau (fig. 27), where the arrows of Love are being prepared. It is in accordance with this idea that Ronsard has Nuit put on a cloak which symbolizes, through its embroidered design, procreation ("Amour y fut portrait, & ce doux exercice / Qui garde que le monde orphelin ne perisse," lines 275-76),<sup>17</sup> and sends Sommeil

<sup>16</sup> See his commentary on *Timaëus* 20D-E.

<sup>17</sup> "Love was depicted on it, and that sweet activity which prevents the world from dying as an orphan." This idea is similar to the depiction of the three kinds

down to Earth to bind Hyver with a "cheine de miel" (line 281), a symbol of sexual pleasure. Invisibly, Sommeil enters the camp of Hyver (lines 285-92) and puts him to sleep, after which he is bound up by Mercury (a generative act, as we have seen), and brought before Jupiter.

The pact made by Jupiter with Hyver at the end of the hymn is typical of many of the agreements found in aetiological myths dealing with the seasons, while at the same time establishing a link with another poem in the 1563 *plaquette*, *L'Adonis* (L. XII. 108-26):

Va-ten là bas en terre & commande troys moys:  
 Je te donne pouvoir de renverser les boys,  
 D'esbranler les rochers, d'arrester les rivières,  
 Et soubz un frain glacé les brider prisonnières,  
 Et de la grande Mer les humides sillons  
 Tourner ores de vens, ores de tourbillons.  
 Je te fais le seigneur des pluies, & des nues,  
 Des neiges, des frimas, & des gresles menues,  
 Et des vens que du ciel pour jamais je banis:  
 Et si veux, quand Venus ira voir Adonis,  
 Que tu la traittes bien, pour voir apres Cybelle  
 Se germer de leur veüe, & s'en faire plus belle.

(lines 373-84)

(Go down to earth, and be in command for three months: I give you authority to blow down the woods, to move the rocks, to halt the rivers and bind them as prisoners beneath an icy bridle, and to churn up the watery furrows of the open sea, at one time with winds, at another with whirlpools. I make you lord of the rains and clouds, the snows, frosts, and slender hail, and the winds which I banish forever from heaven. Yet still I desire, when Venus goes to see Adonis, that you deal kindly with her, to see afterwards Cybeleurgeon at their sight, and become more beautiful.)

A note in the early editions, cited by Laumonier, explains that "Par Venus, Adonis et Cybele, il entend le blé, l'humeur generante et la

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of love on Venus' *cestos* in *Des peintures contenues dedans un tableau*, see above, chapter 2.

terre" ("By Venus, Adonis, and Cybele, he means the corn, the generative moisture, and the earth"), and a similar explanation is to be found in *Natalis Comes* where Adonis, however, is equated with the sun:

Finxerunt antiqui, qui Adonim solem esse putarunt, illum ab apro hirsuta & aspera fera ictum, quia aspera sit & hirsuta hyems, per quam solis vires paulatim deficiunt.

(fol. 162<sup>r</sup>)

(The ancients, who thought Adonis was the sun, made up a story that he was struck by a wild boar, a rough-haired and harsh beast, because winter is harsh and rough, and during that time the strength of the sun gradually fails.)

Ronsard's seasonal hymns, then, have much in common with the visual arts' representation of the seasons. A series of graphic tableaux narrates the origins of the seasons in mythical terms, with individual descriptive details contributing to an overall iconographical reading. The style of this narrative, too, is manneristic in its use of variety, *copia*, abundance of graphic detail, and bizarre imagery, and also, it must be admitted, in its comparative obscurity. For, as in the *Second Livre des Hymnes*, Ronsard is using Neo-Platonic imagery, including a number of shocking fables, in order to convey a Neo-Platonic message in a similar manner to the treatment of the seasons in Renaissance paintings.

In the context of Ronsard's educational and poetic development, this is not surprising. In his reading of Homer, Dorat frequently interprets incidents in the *Odyssey* (for example, Aeolus and the winds or the cattle of the Sun) in terms of a meteorological or cosmological explanation, and Ronsard's desire to encapsulate philosophical and scientific ideas in poetic form would have led him quite naturally to this mystical treatment of such ideas. The narrative, mythological approach, which had proved to be so successful in the *Second Livre des Hymnes*, is successfully adapted in the seasonal hymns, and it is precisely the narrative framework which allows the poet to continue to develop the visual qualities of his poetry, not only through vivid descriptions, but also through the use of the extended Homeric simile, justified by the inspired, epic style. Perhaps, too, the popularity of the seasons as a subject in the visual arts



encouraged Ronsard to provide his own version, to show the greater potential of philosophical poetry over art.

But the seasonal hymns form part of a whole collection of poems, and as we have already noted, there are close links between the fictions relating to the seasons and at least one of the mythological narratives contained in the *plaquette*, *L'Adonis*. In the 1584 edition of the *Hymnes*, on the other hand, the seasonal hymns would stand in the middle of the *Second Livre des Hymnes*, flanked by the *Hymne de la Philosophie*, the *Hercule chrestien*, and the *Hymne de Pollux et de Castor* at the beginning, and the *Hymne de l'Or*, the *Hymne de Bacchus*, and the *Hymne de la Mort* at the end.

In fact, the subject of gold is at the heart of the *Élégie* which follows the seasonal hymns (L. XII. 86–92), though whereas the *Hymne de l'Or* is in the form of a eulogy, gold is seen in the elegy as heralding the entry of corruption into the world. The seasonal hymns recount the equilibrium established by Jupiter on earth. It is logical that the next poem should tell of the introduction of man's corrupting influence as, for example, Ovid does in his account in book 1 of the *Metamorphoses*:

nec tantum segetes alimentaue debita dives  
poscebatur humus, sed itum est in viscera terrae,  
quasque recondiderat Stygiisque admoverat umbris,  
effodiuntur opes, inritamenta malorum.

(*Metamorphoses* 1. 137–40)

(Not only did they demand of the rich soil the crops and the food which they owed, but they also went into the bowels of the earth, and the wealth which he had hidden and buried in Stygian darkness was dug up, an incentive to sin.)

This is just how Ronsard begins in the opening of the *Élégie* addressed to Odet de Baillon:

Celuy devoit mourir de l'esclat d'un tonnerre  
Qui premier descouvrit les mines de la Terre,  
Qui becha ses boyaux, & hors de ses rongnons  
Tira l'Argent & l'Or, desloyaux compagnons.

(L. XII. 87. 1–4)

(He should have been struck down dead by a thunderbolt who



first uncovered the mines of the earth, dug into her bowels, and drew from her kidneys silver and gold, unfaithful companions.)

In a traditional *topos* concerning man's corruption (developed, for example, in the opening of Catullus 64), the desire for gold is seen as causing men to take to the sea in ships:

Les hauts pins, qui avoient si longuement esté  
 Sur la syrne des monts plantés en seureté,  
 Sentirent la congnee & tornés en navire  
 Voguerent aux deux bords où le Soleil se vire,  
 Passerent sans frayeur les ondes de la mer,  
 Virent Scylle & Charybde asprement escumer,  
 Conduits d'un gouverneur, dont la mordante envye  
 D'amasser des lingots baille aux ondes sa vye,  
 Afin de raporter des pays estrangers  
 Des dyamans cherchés par cent mille dangers.

(lines 47-56)

(The tall pines, which for so long had been fixed in safety on the tops of the mountains, felt the axe and, having been turned into ships, sailed to the two shores to which the Sun travels, passed without dread the waves of the sea, saw Scylla and Charybdis foaming grimly, guided by a pilot whose gnawing desire to heap up ingots commits his life to the waves in order to bring back from foreign shores diamonds, sought out in the midst of a hundred thousand perils.)

Ronsard is developing here a commonplace already used in the *Hymne de l'Or* (L. VIII. 179-205), in which Scylla and Charybdis are associated with avarice:

Par luy [gold] le Marinier se donne à la Fortune  
 Et desprise les Ventz, & les flotz de Neptune  
 En une fraisle nef, & si ose passer  
 Charybde sans frayeur, pour de l'OR amasser.

(lines 203-6)

(Through gold, the sailor entrusts himself to Fortune and makes light of the winds and Neptune's billows in a fragile ship, and still he dares to pass Charybdis without dread in order to heap up gold.)

Yet despite the moralizing tone of much of the elegy, Ronsard ends up by asking the king's treasurer for some money:

Il en faut seulement pour la nécessité,  
Et pour nous secourir en nostre adversité:  
Le reste est superflu. . . . (lines 107-9)

(We only require enough for our needs, and in order to help us in our adversity: the rest is superfluous. . . .)

The following *Eglogue* (L. XII. 93-108) also has close links with the seasonal hymns in that the dedicatees of the *Hymne du Printemps* and the *Hymne de l'Esté*, Robertet d'Aluye and Robertet de Fresne, appear as the shepherds Aluyot and Fresnet. Sexual desire lies at the heart of the two songs that the shepherds sing, while the motifs of the changing seasons and of sexual activity in the world of nature are always close to the surface, as in lines 57-70:

J'ay beau me promener au travers d'un bocage,  
J'ay beau paistre mes beufs le long d'un beau rivage,  
J'ay beau voir le Printemps de sur les arbrisseaux,  
Oyr les rossignols, gazoiller les ruisseaux,  
Et voir entre les fleurs par les herbes menues  
Sauter les aignelets soubz leurs meres cornues,  
Voir les boucz se choquer, & tout le long du jour  
Voir les beliers jaloux se battre pour l'amour:  
Ce plaisir, toutesfois, non plus ne me contente  
Que si du froid Hyver l'effroyable tormente  
Avoit terny les champs, & en mille façons  
Getté dessus les fleurs la neige & les glaçons,  
Et que les saints tropeaus des cent Nymphes compaignes  
Ne vinssent plus de nuit dancer sur les montaignes.

(It is in vain that I walk through a grove, in vain that I pasture my oxen along a beautiful riverbank, in vain that I see spring appear on the shrubs, hear the nightingales or the streams bubbling, and see amid the flowers in the fine grass the little lambs gambolling beneath their horned mothers, see the billy goats butting one another, and all day long see the rams jealously fighting out of love; yet this pleasure fills me with no more contentment than if the awful torment of cold Winter

had discolored the fields, and in countless ways flung snow and ice on the flowers, and if the sacred troops of the hundred companion nymphs no longer came at night to dance on the mountains.)

Moreover, the shepherds sing their songs in an "Antre sacré" (line 23), frequently in Ronsard the scene for revelatory poetry.<sup>18</sup>

Laumonier is as usual correct in identifying the source for this eclogue, Andrea Navagero's *Lusus* 27 (the *Iolas*).<sup>19</sup> The Venetian's poem is in the form of a monologue by the shepherd Iolas addressed to his absent beloved, Amaryllis. Ronsard divides the material of Iolas' lament between his two shepherds. One thing that may have attracted Ronsard in Navagero is his strongly pictorial style, commented upon by a modern editor, Alice Wilson.<sup>20</sup> This is apparent, for example, in the description of Iolas' cave, which itself bears some resemblance to Homer's Cave of the Nymphs.

Est mihi praeruptis ingens sub rupibus antrum,  
Quod croceis hederæ circum sparsere corymbis:  
Vestibulumque ipsum silvestris obumbrat oliva:  
Hanc prope fons, lapide effusus qui desilit alto,  
Defertur rauco per laevia saxa susurro:  
Hinc late licet immensi vasta aequora ponti  
Despicere, et longe venientes cernere fluctus.

(lines 28–34)

(I have a large cave at the foot of a rugged crag, which ivy has strewn around with clusters of saffron-tinted berries. A wild olive tree shades the entrance itself, and near it, a spring, gushing down from a stone on high, is channelled down over light pebbles in a gurgling whisper. Down from here can be seen some way off the vast surface of the huge sea, and the tides coming from afar.)

Ronsard's description of pastoral bliss expands this version in some

<sup>18</sup> For example, in the early ode *Le Ravissement de Cephale* (L. II. 133–47) as well as *L'Orphée*, discussed below.

<sup>19</sup> The edition I have used is *Lusus: Text and Translation*, edited by Alice E. Wilson (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1973). The translation is my own.

<sup>20</sup> *Lusus*, 14–15.

details, and instead of overlooking the sea, Fresnet's cave looks down upon Paris:

De là tu pourras voir Paris la grande ville,  
Où de mes pasteurs la brigade gentille  
Portent vendre au marché ce dont je n'ay besoin,  
Et toujours argent fraiz leur sonne dans le poing.  
(lines 101-4)

(From there you will be able to see the great city of Paris, where the goodly band of my young shepherds take what I do not need to sell at market, and they always have plenty of money jingling in their fists.)

Clearly, this eclogue serves a complimentary purpose, immortalizing the two secretaries of state through the allegory of pastoral verse, while at the same time embroidering upon the theme of fertility present in the seasonal hymns. The next poem, on the other hand, has absolutely clear connections with the cycle of the seasons, although Ronsard tries to throw a smoke screen over the allegorical nature of the myth by a banal and somewhat misogynistic ending, referring to the speed with which Venus forgets Adonis:

Telles sont & seront les amities des femmes,  
Qui au commencement sont plus chaudes que flammes:  
Espointes de fureur, à la fin leur amour  
Comme une belle fleur ne se garde qu'un jour.  
(lines 365-68)

(Such are and will always be women's affections, which to start with are hotter than flames; though spurred on by frenzy, in the end their love only lasts, like a beautiful flower, for a day.)

We have already noted the allusion to Venus and Adonis as symbols of the ripeness of the harvest at the end of the *Hymne de l'Hyver*. Natalis Comes provides various allegorical explanations of the story, although they all concern different aspects of the changing year. In its most general form, Adonis' presence on earth with Venus symbolizes the six fertile months of the year, and for the remaining time he is with Proserpina, Venus' rival for his affections, in the Underworld:



Fama est praeterea Venerem pactam esse cum Proserpina vt sex menses mortuus Adonis esset apud Proserpinam, sed ea lege ne illum Proserpina in thorum, aut in amplexum acciperet: alios sex menses esset apud Venerem.

(Besides there is a story that Venus came to an agreement with Proserpina that the dead Adonis should for six months be with Proserpina, but on condition that Proserpina would not receive him into her bed or in her embrace; but for the other six months he would be with Venus.)

Adonis might also stand for the corn seed, which is in the ground for half the year, and growing above it for the other half. Or, as we have seen, Adonis could symbolize the sun.<sup>21</sup>

Although Ronsard does not make explicit any allegorical interpretation in his version of the fable—indeed, as we have seen, he goes out of his way to obstruct such an interpretation—he nevertheless includes narrative and descriptive details which appear to allude to the various allegorical meanings attributed to the fable. Thus, Venus and Adonis' love-making is accompanied, as is often the case in Renaissance paintings, by similar signs of sexual activity in the world of nature:

Pourveu qu'elle ait toujours sa bouche sur tes levres,  
Elle ne craint l'odeur de tes puantes chevres,  
Pourveu qu'elle t'embrasse, & ne veut refuser  
La nuit de sur la dure avec toy reposer,  
De sur le mol tapis des herbes verdoyantes  
T'embrassant au milieu de tes brebis bellantes  
Et de tes grands tropeaux, qui jusqu'au point du jour  
Font (comme tu luy fais) aux genisses l'amour.

(lines 81–88)

(As long as she keeps her mouth to your lips, she does not fear the smell of your stinking goats; as long as she clasps you in her arms and will not refuse to rest with you at night on the hard ground, clasping you on the soft carpet of green grass

<sup>21</sup> See Comes, *Mythologiae*, fol. 161<sup>r</sup>. On the myth of Adonis in general, see Hélène Tuzet, *Mort et résurrection d'Adonis: étude de l'évolution d'un mythe* (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1987).

in the midst of your lowing ewes and your vast herds, which  
until daybreak make love, like you, to the heifers.)

Mars, who (in an additional detail to the myth introduced by Ronsard) is jealous of the young mortal, is associated with Thrace, proverbial for its cold winters as well as the bellicose nature of its inhabitants:

Jaloux & furieux, son bouclier il embrasse,  
De sa pique esbranlant les montagnes de Thrace.  
(lines 93–94)

(Jealously and frenziedly, he clasps his shield, causing with his  
pike the mountains of Thrace to shake.)

More particularly, the boar, the agent of Mars' revenge, is linked with the destructiveness of winter by Ronsard's choice of simile in lines 183–88:

Ses yeux estoient de feu, & son dos herissé  
De poil gros & rebours se tenoit couroussé:  
Escumeux il bruvoit, comme par les vallées  
Font bruit en escumant les neiges devalées,  
L'hyver, quand les torrens se roulent contre val,  
Et font au laboureur & aux bleds tant de mal.

(His eyes were fiery, and his back, bristling with coarse, wayward hair, was arched in rage; he snorted, foaming at the mouth, like the noise made by an avalanche, foaming through the valleys in winter, when the mountain streams roll downward, and cause so much damage for the ploughman and the cornfields.)

As Adonis lies dying, in a scene reminiscent of the Fontainebleau fresco of the death of Adonis (fig. 7), Venus' beauty begins to fade like flowers at the end of summer:

Las! avecques ta mort est morte ma beauté,  
Ma couleur est ternie, ainsi comme en esté  
Se ternissent les fleurs. . . .  
(lines 239–41)

(Alas! with your death has died my beauty; my complexion  
has faded just as in summer the flowers fade. . . .)

There is even an allusion in Venus' lament to Proserpina: "Car desormais de toy jouïra Proserpine" ("For henceforth, Proserpina will

enjoy you," line 346). The flowers that spring up as a result of Adonis' blood and Venus' tears mark the beginning of a new cycle of birth, maturation, and death:

Allés parmi les prés, & contés aux fleurettes  
 Que Venus a versé autant de larmelettes  
 Que de sang Adonis: du sang la belle fleur  
 De la Rose sanglante a portait sa couleur,  
 Et du tendre cristal de mes larmes menues  
 Les fleurs des Coquerets blanches sont devenues.

(lines 297-302)

(Go into the meadows, and tell the little flowers that Venus has shed as many tender tears as Adonis has shed drops of blood; from his blood, the beautiful flower of the blood-red rose has painted its hue, and from the tender crystal of my little tears the flowers of the winter cherry have turned white.)

Ronsard's model for much of Venus' lament, Bion's *Lament for Adonis*, ends with two lines which emphasize this cyclical process (Bion 1. 99-100):

λῆγε γόων Κυθήρεια τὸ σήμερον, ἴσχεο κομμῶν,  
 δεῖ σε πάλιν κλαῦσαι, πάλιν εἰς ἕτος ἄλλο δακρῦσαι.

(Give up your wailing for today, Cytherea, and no longer beat your breast; you will have to wail again and weep again, come another year.)

The final mythological poem in the *plaquette*, *L'Orphée*, contains two stories, one recounted by the centaur Cheiron, the other by Orpheus. The poem is carefully structured, more so even than the eclogue, where the genre would lead us to expect the two shepherds to sing songs of equal length. Although Fresnet and Aluyot's songs are 130 lines and 134 lines respectively, the songs of Cheiron and Orpheus are each 136 lines (lines 71-206 and 209-344). Moreover, in the course of the seventy-line introduction, Ronsard emphasizes the inspired nature of their poetry:

Je veux en les [the Argonauts] chantant me souvenir  
 d'Orphée,  
 Qui avoit d'Apollon l'ame toute echaufée,  
 Et qui, laissant à part sejourner l'aviron,

Osa pincer la Lyre & respondre à Chiron.

(lines 5–8)

(In singing of the Argonauts, I wish to remember Orpheus, whose soul was all inflamed by Apollo and who, letting his oar rest to one side, dared to pluck his lyre and reply to Cheiron.)

The Argonauts, led by Achilles' father Peleus, go off to visit Cheiron and Achilles in their "Antre sacré" (line 51), as usual in Ronsard the location of a mystical experience. After being wined and dined by Cheiron, the centaur proceeds to sing the story of Iphis, told by Ovid at the end of book 9 of the *Metamorphoses*, while Orpheus recounts his own misfortunes with Eurydice, narrated by Ovid at the beginning of book 10 of the *Metamorphoses*.

Few Renaissance mythographers mention the Iphis fable, and the various editions of the *Metamorphoses* fail to offer an allegorical explanation. Ronsard's account is that Ligdus, the husband of Telethusa, because of his hatred of "la race feminine" (line 77), instructs his pregnant wife to kill the child she is expecting if it is a girl, but to save it if it is a boy. However, the goddess Lucina (or Isis, later on in Ronsard's account) appears in a dream to Telethusa and instructs her to keep the child, whatever its sex. Inevitably, she has a girl:

Laquelle, ô Teletuse, en cachete tu fis  
Nourrir pour un garçon, & la nomma Yphis,  
Du nom de son ayeul. Or sa face fut telle  
Qu'autant elle sembloit une jeune pucelle  
Qu'un jeune damoyseau, tenant le milieu d'eux,  
Et son acoustrement estoit propre à tous deux.

(lines 99–104)

(Whom, Telethusa, you secretly brought up as a boy, and called her Yphis, after her grandfather. Now her appearance was such that she resembled a young maid as much as a young boy, being midway between the two, and her manner of dressing was suitable to both.)

Ligdus wishes to marry his "son" to Ianthé, and in fact the two are in love with each other. Mother and daughter try to postpone the impossible marriage as long as possible, but on the eve of the event,



they go to the temple of Isis. Telethusa prays to the goddess, and then:

Hors du temple sortie à peine n'estoit pas  
 La mere, quand Yphis la suit d'un plus grand pas,  
 En lieu d'un teint vermeil une barbe follete  
 Cotonne son menton, sa peau tendre & doillete  
 Devint fort & robuste, & la masle vigueur  
 Luy echaufa le sang, les membres & le cuer:  
 Ses cheveux sont plus courts que de coustume, & somme  
 En lieu d'une pucelle elle devint un homme.

(lines 199–206)

(The mother had scarcely left the temple when Yphis follows her with a longer stride; instead of a ruddy complexion, his chin is downy with a young mossy beard, his tender, delicate skin became tough and robust, and male strength warmed his blood, his limbs, and his heart. His hair is shorter than usual, and, in brief, instead of a maid she became a man.)

What, then, are we to make of this story of androgyny, transvestism, and sex change? Clearly, the myth is of the shocking kind likely to embody an altogether different allegorical meaning, and the deliberately misleading moral that precedes it is too bland to offer a solution:

L'homme perd la raison qui se mocque des Dieux:  
 Ils sont de nostre affaire & de nous soucieux,  
 Et du ciel ont là haut toute force & puissance  
 Sur tout cela qui vit & prent icy naissance.

(lines 71–74)

(He who mocks the gods loses his mind: they are mindful of us and of our business, and from the sky above have all strength and power over everything which lives and is born here.)

In the context of the seasonal hymns and the *Adonis* poem, the interpretation (which seems to be Ronsard's own) becomes more obvious. The Egyptian goddess Isis was, of course, closely connected with the moon (hence Ronsard's assimilation of Isis and Lucina) and the seasonal changes. Ronsard's androgynous Yphis is a symbol of the

incomplete fertility of spring, seen in the description of Printemps in the *Hymne de l'Esté*:

... l'un fut Hermaphrodite,  
(Le Printemps est son nom) de puissance petite,  
Entre masle & femelle, inconstant, incertain,  
Variable en effet du soir au lendemain.

(L. XII. 40. 109-12)

(One was hermaphrodite [Spring is his name], of little strength, halfway between male and female, inconstant, uncertain, variable in his effect from one day to the next.)

Much is made by Ronsard of the sterility of Yphis' love for Ianthe (lines 117-68), notably in the Tantalus allusion at the culmination of her lament:

Je meurs de soif en l'eau, & si l'eau ne me fuit,  
Et de faim au milieu des pommes et du fruit.

(lines 167-68)

(I am dying of thirst in the midst of water, and yet the water does not flee from me, and from hunger in the midst of apples and fruit.)

The transformation of the bisexual Yphis into a man ("... & la masle vigueur / Luy echaufa le sang, les membres & le cueur") is akin to the change from spring to summer. The masculine qualities of strength and heat are those associated by Ronsard, as we have seen, with Esté:

L'Esté fut masle entier, ardant, roux, & collere,  
Estincelant & chault, ressemblant à son pere. ...

(L. XII. 40. 113-14)

(Summer was entirely male, hot, red-headed and irritable, sparkling and warm, like his father. ...)

So, it seems probable that, in the context of the *plaque* as a whole, the Yphis story is an allegory of the transformation of spring into summer, allowing the fruitful conjunction of Yphis and Ianthe. In this context, it would appear that Ronsard's "misspelling" of the name of Ovid's character, Iphis, points to an incomplete anagram of

Physi(s), or Nature.<sup>22</sup> Ianthe (no doubt from *ιαίνω* = "to warm") would then represent the warming powers of love, which help to transform Yphis into a man.

Orpheus' song (lines 209–344) recounts the well-known story of his love of Eurydice, and in addition to the source in the *Metamorphoses* already mentioned, Ronsard also alludes to Virgil's account in book 4 of the *Georgics*.<sup>23</sup> Although traditional allegorical explanations do not associate Orpheus' descent into the Underworld with the cycle of the seasons, it is easy to see why Ronsard would have chosen the story to follow the Iphis fable. The Underworld is associated by Ronsard, as we have seen in his use of the Adonis myth, with dormant nature. Orpheus is led there, inspired by his love for Eurydice, and although he is unsuccessful in his quest to restore her to the upper world, he is successful through his harmonious singing and lyre playing, in bringing peace to the inhabitants of Hades (lines 269–80):

Faisant telle oraison, les ames sont venues,  
Ainsi que gresillons, greslettes & menues,  
Pepier à l'entour de mon Luc qui sonnoit,  
Et de son chant piteux les Manes estonnoit.  
La Parque, que jamais pleurer on n'avoit veue,  
Escoutant ma chanson à pleurer fut esmue.  
Tantale n'eut soucy de sa punition,  
Sisiphe de son roc, de sa roue Ixion:  
En repos fut la cruche & la main des Belides,  
Et dit on que long temps des fieres Eumenides  
La face en larmoyant de pitié se paslit,  
Tant ma douce chanson le cueur leur amolit!

(With this prayer, the souls arrived like crickets, tiny and insubstantial, and cheeped around my lute, which was playing and astonishing the Shades with its pitiful song. The goddess of Fate, who had never been seen to weep, on hearing my song was moved to tears. Tantalus had no thought for his punishment, Sisyphus for his rock, or Ixion for his wheel; the

<sup>22</sup> This type of etymology, known as *anagrammatismus*, was practised by Jean Dorat; see Geneviève Demerson, *Dorat en son temps*, 214–24.

<sup>23</sup> On the subject of Orpheus, see Françoise Joukovsky, *Orphée et ses disciples dans la poésie française et néo-latine du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Geneva: Droz, 1970).

jug and hands of the Danaides were at rest, and it is said that for a long time the faces of the fierce Eumenides grew pale, shedding tears of pity, so much did my sweet song soften their hearts.)

Moreover, if Orpheus, on his return to the mortal world, is uninterested in food or drink for a period of seven months:

De jour en jour suyvant s'amenuisoit ma vie,  
Je n'avois de Bacus ny de Ceres envie  
(lines 325-26)

(From one day to the next my life grew weaker; I had no desire for the gifts of Bacchus or of Ceres)

he recovers through the intervention of his mother, the Muse Calliope, and the poem ends with a scene of natural abundance:

A tant se teut Orphée, & les bestes sauvages  
Erroient devant la porte: oyseaux de tous plumages  
Volletoient de sur luy, & les pins, qui baissoient  
Les testes pour l'oyr, devant l'Antre dansoient,  
Tant leur plaisoit le son d'une si douce Lyre,  
Que depuis dans le Ciel les Dieux ont fait reluire.  
(lines 345-50)

(Thereupon Orpheus grew silent, and the wild beasts wandered in front of his entrance: birds of all different plumage flew above him, and the pines, bowing their heads to hear him, danced in front of the cave, so much did they like the sound of such a sweet lyre, which the gods have since caused to shine in the heavens.)

The pastoral scene which ends the poem provides the clue to the interpretation of this story. If the story of Yphis represents the passage of spring into summer, then Orpheus' descent into the Underworld, where his plaintive love music inspires the normally stern inhabitants, must represent the passage from autumn to winter, the season, as we have seen, during which the new beginning of the year is prepared. The arrival of the birds and the rejoicing of the pine trees at the end denote the return of springtime, and a new beginning.

The final emphasis on Orpheus' lyre, whose seven strings symbol-



ized the seven planets and the harmony of the spheres, is a fitting conclusion to a collection of poems concerning the harmonious succession of the seasons. As Patricia Vicari writes:<sup>24</sup>

... his lyre is the clue to his power. Its seven strings symbolize the seven planets, seven heavens, seven archons, and the divine cosmic harmony. It is not merely symbolic of harmony, however, but magically able to induce it, for a symbol, to the magically minded, is never a mere representation, but also a means of producing an effect.

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The lyre provides a link for the first of the two new compositions which would find their way into editions of the hymns printed during Ronsard's lifetime: the *Chant triomphal pour jouer sur la lyre sur l'insigne victoire qu'il a pleu à Dieu donner à Monseigneur, Frere du Roy* (L. XV. 61–66), first printed in 1569, and *Les Estoilles envoyées à Monsieur de Pibrac en Polonne* (L. XVII. 37–44), first published in 1575 and subsequently "replacing" the *Hymne des Astres* in the 1584 edition of Ronsard (see Appendix 2). Three further hymns, *De Mercure* (L. XVIII. 265–74), *Des Peres de famille, à Monsieur S. Blaise* (L. XVIII. 275–80), and the unfinished *De Monsieur Saint Roch* (L. XVIII. 280–82) were added to the hymns in the posthumous 1587 edition of Ronsard's works.

Like the earliest of Ronsard's hymns, these five compositions are quite varied in nature, with only the hymn *De Mercure* corresponding to the type of composition which we have been considering from chapter 5 of this study. The *Chant triomphal* celebrates the future Henry III's victory over the Huguenots at Jarnac (13 March 1569), although subsequently it was applied to his victory at Moncontour (3 October 1569).<sup>25</sup> In fact, with its choice of meter and Horatian opening, it might more suitably have found its way into the *Odes*

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<sup>24</sup> "Sparagmos: Orpheus among the Christians," in *Orpheus: The Metamorphoses of a Myth*, edited by John Warden (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 73.

<sup>25</sup> See Laumonier's introductory note on the subject, L. XV. 61. n. 1. The poem is partly inspired by Horace, *Odes* 4. 4.

rather than the *Hymnes*. The poem celebrates Henry's victory while at the same time marvelling at his youth.

As for *Les Estoilles*, this poem was originally designated an ode by Ronsard, although with its greater philosophical content, it has more in common with the 1555 hymns than the *Chant triomphal* does. As in the *Hymne des Astres*, Ronsard views everything in the sublunar world as being controlled by the stars:

On cognoistra que tout  
Prend son estre & son bout  
Des celestes chandelles,  
Que le Soleil ne void  
Rien ça bas qui ne soit  
En servage sous elles. (L. XVII. 38. 25-30)

(It will be seen that everything derives its being and its end from the heavenly candles, that the sun sees nothing on earth which is not subservient to them.)

However, if the tone of the 1555 hymn had been triumphant and optimistic, the opening of this hymn is more measured:

Chante moy du ciel la puissance,  
Et des Estoilles la valeur,  
D'où le bon-heur & le mal-heur  
Vient aux mortelz dés la naissance. (lines 11-14)

(Sing to me of the power of the heavens, the valor of the stars, from which good and ill fortune come to mortals from their birth.)

Here, it is mortal man's helplessness that is emphasized, rather than the possibilities of knowledge offered by the translunar world.

En vain l'homme de sa priere  
Vous tourmente soir & matin,  
Il est trainé par son destin,  
Comme est un flot de sa riviere,  
Ou comme est le tronçon  
D'un arraché glaçon,  
Qui roule à la traverse,  
Ou comme un tronc froissé

Que le vent courroucé  
Culbute à la renverse.

Bref les humaines creatures  
Sont de Fortune le jouët:  
De sus le rond de son rouët  
Elle tourne noz avantures.

(lines 41–54)

(It is to no avail that man torments you with his prayers night and morning; he is drawn by his fate like a wave by its river, or like a fragment of a broken icicle which rolls in its way, or like a shattered tree trunk which the angry wind knocks down backwards. In short, human creatures are the plaything of Fortune, which turns our destinies on the circle of her wheel.)

In true Platonic spirit, Ronsard states that only the philosopher can in some way escape the stars' influence (lines 55–60), for they are subservient to God and His order. As Odette de Mourgues writes in her analysis of this poem:

Order rules this unceasing movement. Its harmonious nature is underlined by the pattern of a dance, by the stress on regular recurrence and by the general impression of a closed circuit. The winged feet of centuries "se suyvent d'une mesme trace." Water comes from the sea and goes back there. Several images conjure up the idea of the circle: "le rouët" of fortune, "le cercle de la lune"; and the circle is the symbol of perfect unity.<sup>26</sup>

However, although the poem covers similar topics to the *Hymne des Astres*, the tone is more resigned, more generally pessimistic than that of the earlier poem, even though the philosophical message is similar, and no doubt this is attributable to the political situation in France in the wake of the St. Bartholomew massacre. By 1575, the main figures on whom Ronsard had pinned his hopes for patronage in the 1550s were dead: Odet de Coligny in 1570, Gaspard de Coligny, the first victim of the Saint-Barthélemy, and Charles de Lorraine in 1574.

Around ten years later, Ronsard composed his last mythological

<sup>26</sup> See "Ronsard's Later Poetry," in *Ronsard the Poet*, 300.

hymn, *De Mercure*.<sup>27</sup> It was written during his final winter (1584–85), and it is appropriate that, on the point of death, he should dedicate a poem to the god who traditionally acts as psychopomp. This aspect of Hermes is not alluded to in the Homeric hymn, which provides Ronsard with a few details for his own poem, but is included in Marullus' *Hymnus Mercurio*:

Vestrum et aurata revocare virga  
Sedibus functas animas sepultis,  
Vestrum et invisi spatiis iniquis  
Reddere Averni.

(*Hymni naturales* 2. 8. 65–68)

(It is also your task to recall with your golden wand dead souls from their slumbering abode, your task to return them to the hostile plains of hated Avernus.)

Ronsard dedicates a section of his own hymn to this aspect of the god:

Du reste il [viz. Jupiter] en ourdit des talonniers, qu'il  
boute  
Aux talons de son fils pour mieux fendre la route  
Des Cieux, qui comme un Pan de beaux yeux sont  
couvers,  
Et pour descendre en bas au plus creux des enfers:  
Courrier aux Dieux d'enhault & d'embas agreable,

.....

... Alec-ton,  
Qui te faict reverence alors que tu ameines  
Nos ames voir de Styx les bourbeuses areines,  
Et quand le vieil Charon serviteur de la Mort  
En sa gondole assis nous passe à l'autre bort.

(L. XVIII. 267. 35–39, 42–46)

(Moreover, Jupiter contrives wings for his heels [out of his

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<sup>27</sup> In addition to Laumonier's notes, see Michel Simonin, who includes some details about Ronsard's final compositions in his edition of Du Perron, *Oraison funebre sur la mort de Monsieur de Ronsard (1586)* (Geneva: Droz, 1985), 55.



eagle's feathers], which he fixes on the heels of his son so that he can better cut through the path to heaven, which like a peacock is covered with beautiful eyes, and descend below into the depths of the Underworld, a messenger who is agreeable to the celestial and infernal gods. . . . Alecto bows to you when you bring our souls to see the muddy sands of the river Styx and when ancient Charon, Death's servant, takes us to the other side, sitting in his wherry.)

Mercury is also a suitable subject in that, above all else, he represents for Ronsard the logos in all its aspects (speech and eloquence, but also reason) and is also credited with the invention of the lyre:

Dieu à qui l'âge antique a doré tout le bec,  
 « Pour monstrier qu'aisément l'eloquente parole  
 « Persuadant l'esprit dedans le cœur s'en-vole,  
 « Et que rien n'est si fort qu'il ne soit combattu  
 « Par la voix dont le charme est d'extreme vertu,  
 « Et que par le cousteau de la langue emplumée  
 « On fait plus en un jour, qu'en cent ans une armée.  
 (lines 18–24)

(God, whose whole mouth was gilded by antiquity, in order to show that eloquence, persuading the mind, easily flies into our hearts, and that nothing is so strong that it cannot be countered by the voice, whose enchantment is of supreme virtue, and that through the blade of the winged tongue more can be accomplished in a day than an army can do in a hundred years.)

The lyre, which Mercury presents to Apollo in exchange for the cattle he has stolen, marks a strong bond between them, and again underlines those aspects of the god which Ronsard values (see lines 69–74). Although he does not ignore the less serious aspects of the god who is the patron of thieves, charlatans, and alchemists, he certainly plays them down.

Ronsard composed *Des peres de familles, à Monsieur S. Blaise* at the same time as *De Mercure*, and unlike all but one of his previous hymns, the poem is addressed to a Christian saint, and presents a series of prayers for the protection of a rural community. Laumonier informs us that the saint was the patron of the parish of Montrou-

veau near Ronsard's priory at Croixval (L. XVIII. 275. n. 1), and Simonin suggests that he may have attended the ceremonies for the saint's festival on 3 February 1585.<sup>28</sup> The final hymn, *De Monsieur Saint Roch*, describes, as far as it goes, a procession to the shrine of the patron saint of plague sufferers before introducing an ecphrasis which, it appears, was never written.

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In his last year of life, Ronsard at times wished for the plague as an end to his sufferings:

Misericorde ô Dieu, ô Dieu ne me consume  
 A faulte de dormir, plustost sois-je contreint  
 De me voir par la peste ou par la fievre esteint,  
 Qui mon sang deseché dans mes veines allume.  
 (L. XVIII. 178. 5-8)

(Have pity, Lord, oh God, do not consume me through lack of sleep; rather may I be forced to see myself extinguished by the plague or the fever, which burns my dried up blood in my veins.)

He clearly gave some thought to the cyclical nature of things and to the parallels between the seasons and human life. However, in his pain and sleeplessness, he saw things in rather starker terms than he had done twenty years earlier, and it is rather the fleeting nature of springtime that was uppermost in his mind as he awaited death:

L'un meurt en son printemps, l'autre attend la  
vieillesse,  
 Le trespas est tout un, les accidens divers:  
 Le vray tresor de l'homme est la verte jeunesse,  
 Le reste de nos ans ne sont que des hivers. . . .

La jeunesse des Dieux aux hommes n'est donnee  
 Pour gouspiller sa fleur, ainsi qu'on void fanir

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<sup>28</sup> *Oraison funebre*, 55.

La rose par le chauld, ainsi mal gouvernee  
La jeunesse s'enfuit sans jamais revenir.

(L. XVIII. 176. 9-12, 17-20)

(One man dies in the springtime of his life, another awaits old age; death is all the same, its causes various. Man's real treasure is green youth, the remainder of our years are simply winters. . . . The youthfulness of the gods is not given to men to waste its flower; as we see the rose wither from the heat, so ill-governed youth flees, never to return.)

## CHAPTER 8

### *Conclusion*

Les anciens Herôs du sang des Dieux venuz,  
Sont encore aujourd'hui, malgré les ans, congnus,  
Pour avoir fait chanter aux Poëtes leurs gestes  
Qui les ont de mortelz mis au rang des celestes:  
Et j'en veux faire ainsi!

(Ronsard, L. VIII. 6. 9-13)

**T**hroughout this study of Ronsard's hymns, we have been concentrating on two main aspects of composition, *inventio* and *dispositio*, with some attention also being paid to the style of writing. It is now time to draw some conclusions concerning the iconographical and literary intentions of Ronsard's poetry, and the way in which these developed over his poetic career.

In the first place, it should be clear that the basic principles of Neo-Platonism inform the content, the manner of composition, and the structure of the hymns. This is not to say that Ronsard has an essentially pagan outlook on life. Rather, like his friend and colleague Pontus de Tyard, Ronsard considered Neo-Platonism allied to Christianity as offering a coherent explanation of the world. In particular, the *Timaeus* and the commentaries on this and other Platonic dialogues by Proclus, as well as the works of the Florentine Neo-Platonists such as Ficino, provided a means of harmonizing the Judeo-Christian and the Greco-Roman traditions, allowing the syncretist inclinations of Ronsard to synthesize those aspects of the ancient world which he most admired. In doing so, he was merely doing what many other Renaissance humanists, with no poetic axe to grind, were doing, men such as the Swiss poly-



math Conrad Gesner.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Ronsard's conception of God, the creation, the geocentric structure of the universe, the role of demons and angels, the immortality of the soul, the nature of divine inspiration, even the workings of love can be seen to derive, despite the much-resisted advent of Copernican astronomy, from an alliance of Christian and Neo-Platonic ideas.

But in order to effect this harmonization, Ronsard needed to appropriate the methods of Neo-Platonic exegesis, no doubt learnt from Dorat, and more importantly to put them into practice in his own poetry. This took time, even though we can see elements of these methods at work in his early poetry. In particular, it is the handling of myth which is of central importance in the exposition of his ideas. Early odes such as *Des peintures contenues dedans un tableau* (L. I. 259–64) and *La Defloration de Lede* (L. II. 67–79) offer examples of the way in which ideas can be conveyed by apparently shocking myths or by the inclusion of at first sight gratuitous description in the form of ecphrasis or hypotyposis.<sup>2</sup> It is at this point that the iconographical aspects of Ronsard's style come to the fore.

Since for Neo-Platonists sight is the highest of the senses, this emphasis on the visual is altogether appropriate, particularly in compositions whose central mysteries are inspired by Plato and his followers, and in reading descriptive details in the same way that an iconologist might read the details of a painting, we are likely to arrive at a more accurate understanding of Ronsard's works than is offered by a purely literary approach. In fact, the relationship between word and image is slightly more complex than this implies. Just as in Renaissance triumphal entries, emblems, and even paintings and tapestries, there is often a text which comments on and explains the images, so too a similar process is often at work in Ronsard's poems, except that the shift from word to picture is less evident. Narrative, descriptive, and dramatic modes of presentation offer the reader variety and a range of different perspectives. However, the way in which we read a text and its images will depend a great deal on the type of poetry Ronsard is writing and his literary intentions.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, my article "Conrad Gesner et le fabuleux manteau," 312.

<sup>2</sup> See my article "Ronsard's Erotic Diptych: *Le Ravissement de Cephale* and *La Defloration de Lede*" for a detailed analysis of these two narrative poems.

We saw, in chapter 2, Proclus' division of poetry into the categories of inspired, didactic, and mimetic poetry, and his acknowledgment that even a poet like Homer has examples of all these modes of writing in his compositions. Each category must be characterized by a different way of reading, and in particular of reading descriptive detail, yet the mixture of modes in varying degrees, in Ronsard no less than in Homer, inevitably makes a unified reading problematic. In general terms, however, since purely mimetic poetry sets out to imitate the world around us, or in the case of fantastic mimetic poetry the world within us, its descriptions should be read on a literal level. Our pleasure, as readers, is akin to the pleasure experienced by someone looking at a beautiful portrait or landscape: it derives from the artists' ability to provide a heightened and sensual representation of what they observe, to transform it through their own vision, but ultimately to appeal to the senses rather than the intellect. Didactic poetry, on the other hand, should certainly be aesthetically pleasing, but it also aims at being intellectually or morally improving. It requires interpretation, but that interpretation relies normally on a traditional system of symbolism which, while originating in literary sources, is better known through customary use or popularization in the visual arts. We do not need literary antecedents to know that red roses symbolize love, that scales represent justice, or that dogs are images of fidelity. Countless examples of this type of imagery may be seen in medieval and Renaissance art, acting as a visual shorthand to suggest a particular interpretation, and reinforcing a general mood. The emotional impact of a painting representing a madonna and child can vary greatly depending upon how the mother is holding the baby, what attributes they have, and the surroundings in which they are placed.

Inspired poetry, on the other hand, offers an intuitive challenge in addition to its aesthetic and intellectual appeal, and like more basic forms of *énigme*, much of the pleasure is due to the discrepancy between the apparent superficial meaning and the hidden meaning or meanings.<sup>3</sup> A painting of Leda and the swan has a direct appeal as a

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<sup>3</sup> On the *énigme*, see François Lecercle, "Énigme et poésie à Lyon au milieu du seizième siècle," in *Intellectual Life in Renaissance Lyon: Proceedings of the Cambridge Lyon Colloquium (14-16 April 1991)*, edited by Philip Ford and Gillian Jondorf (Cambridge: Cambridge French Colloquia, 1993).

result of its erotic and bizarre content, and this is the aspect which will have the most general effect on viewers. However, for those, such as Francis I and other enlightened Renaissance patrons, who expected to discover a mystery in a work of this kind, the sensual pleasure is heightened by the intellectual or intuitive pleasure of displacing the allegorical veil to see what lies beneath. The interpretation may rely upon traditional or non-traditional readings of pictorial detail, upon specific literary or visual allusions, and all elements in the work are potentially significant.

The same is true of Ronsard's use of myth and imagery in what he would have considered to be his inspired poetry, where it is important to consider the possible meaning of all descriptive detail, and to be aware of intertextual allusions, if the underlying significance of the poem is to be teased out. His earliest examples of ecphrastic mythological poetry, for example *Des peintures contenues dedans un tableau, La Defloration de Lede*, and *Le Ravissement de Cephale*, all offer examples of mystical writing which rely on the astuteness of the reader to be deciphered. As a result, this kind of poetry is far more difficult to compose successfully, if the poet is to avoid giving the impression of merely presenting the reader with a series of conundrums. Unity of style and content is essential; the aesthetic appeal must be at least equal, and certainly not subservient, to the intellectual appeal. This is achieved by the use of visual detail since, for Neo-Platonists, the sight is the highest of our senses, the one which allows us to intuit meaning rather than to deduce it. Moreover, the visual mode of presentation, because it is less precise than verbal presentation, offers greater possibilities for polysemy, and hence a richer-textured work of art. This, of course, was the appeal of the hieroglyph; but to prevent such encoding from descending to the level of the rebus, great skill was required.

As Ronsard gained experience, this expertise developed. Although he composed hymns for most of his life, the main corpus dates from the decade beginning in 1555. During that time, he developed a style and manner of writing which increasingly gained in poetic authority as the presentation of the hymns became more mystical and visual. The tendency to confuse hymn and encomium becomes less marked; the urge to *expound* philosophical ideas in the 1555 collection is replaced by the desire to *show* the effects of such ideas in the seasonal hymns. Didactic imagery gives way to Neo-Platonic imagery, mono-



semy to polysemy. When we come to the 1584 collection, after Ronsard's various revisions and reorganizations, we find a uniformity of tone not always shared by previous collections.

The development of Ronsard's handling of the hymn can be charted through the various collections. The early *Hinne de Bacus*, while providing an indication of how the genre would develop at the poet's hands, is unsatisfactory from a number of points of view. The tone and poetic voice of the work is very much that of Callimachus. The poet does not speak with the authority of the *vates*, as is clear right from the opening of this poem:

Que sauroi-je mieus faire en ce tems de vandanges,  
 Apres avoir chanté d'un verre les louanges,  
 Sinon loüer Bacus & ses festes, afin  
 De celebrer le Dieu des verres & du vin,  
 Qui changea le premier (ô change heureus) l'usage  
 De l'onde Acheloée en plus heureus bruvage?  
 Mais quoi? je suis confus, car je ne sai comment,  
 Ne moins de quel país je dois premierement  
 Chanter d'où est Bacus. . .

(L. VI. 176-77, 1-9)

(What better could I do at this time of grape harvesting, after singing the praises of a glass, than praise Bacchus and his festivities, in order to celebrate the god of glasses and of wine, who was the first to transform [oh fortunate transformation] the use of the waters of the Achelous into a more fortunate beverage? What now? I am confused, for I do not know how, nor even of what country I must first sing of the origins of Bacchus. . .)

Throughout the hymn, there is a constant alternation between the first-person voice of the poet, the second-person appeal to the subject of the poem, Bacchus, along with some third-person narrative of events which do not directly concern the god, as in lines 93-96:

Mais plus je m'ebaïs de la gorge innocente  
 Du Bouc, qui tes autels à ta feste ensanglante,  
 Car sans le Bouc cornu tu n'eusses point treuvé  
 Le vin, par qui tu as tout le monde abreuvé.



(But I am more surprised at the innocent throat of the goat which covers the altars with blood at your festival, for without the horned goat, you would not have discovered the wine, with which you have quenched the thirst of the whole world.)

The impression we receive, then, is that of a dialogue between poet and god which, like Callimachus' tone, is more redolent of wit than of hieratic authority. Moreover, there is a virtual absence of those poetic devices most associated with the grand style, such as the extended Homeric simile. Any comparisons which are to be found tend to have a strictly functional purpose, for example in lines 111-12:

... leur [the lynxes'] regard estoit feu,  
Pareil aus yeus de ceus qui de nuit ont trop beu.

(... their eyes were fiery, like the eyes of those who at night have drunk too much.)

Despite the form of the poem, the style is frequently more reminiscent of the ode than the hymn, including as it does allusions to Horace's Bacchic odes, 2. 19 and 3. 25.

With the 1555 collection of hymns, Ronsard has developed a greater unity of style and, we have argued, a coherent philosophical vision underpinned by Neo-Platonism. Nevertheless, the imagery, and thus the iconographical interpretation, is predominantly didactic in nature, the tone more expository than mystical in both the sublunar and the translunar hymns. In fact, it is the deviations from this central poetic voice in the collection which have caused scholars their main problems in understanding or appreciating such poems as the *Hymne de l'Or* or the *Hercule Chrestien*, where the mixture of expository and mystical modes of expression leave the reader on unsure ground.

The following year witnessed a move to the more oblique Neo-Platonic tradition of imagery, particularly apparent in the two Argonautic hymns. This leads to an increased narrative interest, and also to a heightening of the sensual qualities of the writing: the didactic tone gives way to an inspired tone. In visual terms, the impression we have is one of moving from a room decorated with allegorical representations of abstract phenomena to one adorned with richly wrought mythological paintings. The static gives way to the dynam-

ic, simplicity to complexity, classical balance to a more concealed form of harmony. Ronsard marks this change at the very beginning of the collection:

Remply d'un feu divin qui m'a l'ame eschauffée,  
Je veux mieux que jamais, suivant les pas d'Orphée,  
Decouvrir les secretz de Nature & des Cieux,  
Recherchez d'un esprit qui n'est point ocieux.

(L. VIII. 246. 1-4)

(Filled with divine fire which has warmed my soul, I wish more than ever, following in the footsteps of Orpheus, to reveal the secrets of Nature and the Heavens, sought out by a spirit which is far from idle.)

We have already looked in some detail at the use which Ronsard makes of extended simile in these hymns, which goes to reinforce the grand, epic tone of the poetry, thus enhancing the poetic authority of the writer. Stylistically, Ronsard maintains this tone in the seasonal hymns, while once again emphasizing the importance of the poetic vocation which he is following:

Nouveau Cygne emplumé je veux voller bien haut,  
Et veux comme l'Esté avoir l'estomaq chault  
Des chaleurs d'Apollon...

(L. XII. 36. 11-13)

(I, a newly feathered swan, desire to fly high up, and to have, like Summer, my belly warmed by Apollo's heat...)

or:

Le jour que je fu né, le Daimon qui preside  
Aux Muses me servit en ce Monde de guide,  
M'anima d'un esprit gaillard & vigoureux,  
Et me fist de science & d'honneur amoureux.

(L. XII. 46. 1-4)

(On the day I was born, the Demon who presides over the Muses acted as my guide in this world; he breathed into me a gallant and vigorous spirit, and made me a lover of knowledge and honor.)

While the sheer abundance of descriptive detail in these poems presents an image of considerable richness, quite reminiscent of the works of artists such as Antoine Caron, the intellectual challenge is present in the at times shocking, at times contradictory words of the poet. It is certainly here, in the *Second Livre des Hymnes* and in the seasonal hymns, rather than in the *Franciade*, that Ronsard comes closest to writing successful epic poetry.

The analogy of the Galerie François I<sup>er</sup> has been used in this study as a visual model for Ronsard's hymn collections, and in many ways this model is a helpful one, especially from the contrasting points of view of complexity and order. Unity of theme and classical purity of form were not part of Renaissance thinking, so the relatively complex arrangement of the individual bays in the Galerie François I<sup>er</sup> finds its counterpart in the complex *dispositio* of Ronsard's individual hymns. Diversity too is present in both media, for just as differing organizational principles prevail in different bays at Fontainebleau, so too Ronsard adapts the structure of his hymns to their subjects. Nevertheless, as I hope to have demonstrated, balance and symmetry are at work in the complex patterns both of individual hymns and of whole collections. Looking at the hymn collections diachronically, the analogy of various series of tapestries, with the resultant possibility of reorganization to accommodate new rooms or the addition of new works, might provide a more appropriate analogy.

As Ronsard's hymns grew in number after 1556, he was faced with the problem of rearranging them in the subsequent collections of his works. This inevitably meant that the demands of balance between the books led to sacrifices and compromises with regard to the perfect *dispositio* which we have seen in individual books, notably the 1555 collection. Ronsard seems to prefer to divide his hymns into two books, although between 1567 and 1572/3 they appear in four books. Appendix 2 indicates how the poems were organized during Ronsard's lifetime.

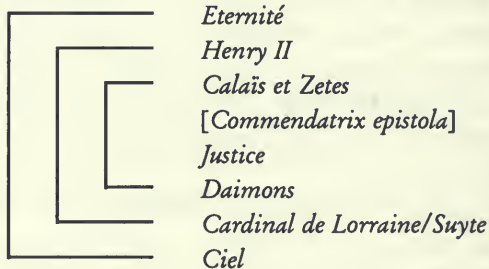
The 1560 edition of Ronsard's *Œuvres* is the first time he was faced with reorganizing the *Hymnes*, which formed the fourth and final volume of the collection. Book 1 was dedicated to Marguerite de France, Book 2 to Odet de Coligny. The *Hymne de l'Éternité*, which opens the collection, retains, as we have seen, its preeminence



in all subsequent editions of the hymns,<sup>4</sup> and the reasons for this are clear: the collection is introduced by a picture of the serenity of the translunar world, presented in stark contrast to the tribulations of the sublunar world, and it is this contrast which we have seen as providing much of the material for the hymns as a whole. The *Hymne de la Philosophie*, which opens book 2, is also concerned with this contrast, but whereas book 1 begins with a translunar view of the universe, book 2 views things from a sublunar perspective.

The second poem in each of the books is encomiastic in nature, with Henry II as the subject in book 1, the Connétable Anne de Montmorency and the Coligny brothers in book 2. Military prowess and valor are prominent in both cases, but so too is the importance of the poet as one who can bestow immortality on people, a theme which is taken up in the two mythological hymns which occupy the third position in each of the two books.

A search for balance is also evident within book 1. The final *Hymne du Ciel*, with its emphasis on the perfection of the translunar world, is an exact counterpoise to the *Hymne de l'Eternité*, with its similar emphasis on the perfection of the hypercosmic world, while the encomiastic *Hymne de tresillustre prince Charles cardinal de Lorraine* and its *Suyte* balance the hymn to Henry II. Similarly, the nature of Calaïs and Zetes, sons of the North Wind, whose natural element is the air, could be seen as a strong link with *Les Daimons*. We would then have the following, again circular, *dispositio* for book 1, where it is complementarity rather than contrast which forms the links between the poems:



This leaves the *Hymne de la Justice* as the pivot of the collection, a

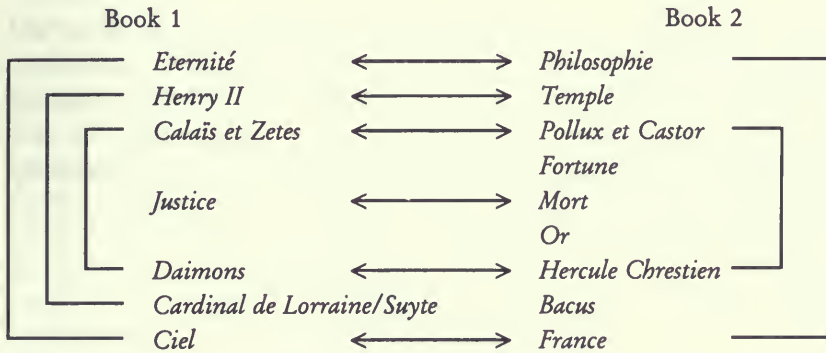
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<sup>4</sup> See above, chap. 6.



poem which, as we have seen, centers upon the circular idea of man's decline from perfection and subsequent return to it, thanks to the cardinal de Lorraine.<sup>5</sup> This hymn is preceded by Michel de l'Hospital's *Commendatrix epistola*, dedicated to the cardinal.

There is an attempt at a similarly circular pattern in book 2, although here it is less convincing. Certainly, the *Hymne de Pollux, et de Castor* and the *Hercule Chrestien* form a pair, with in each case a son or sons of Jupiter acting as benefactors and saviors of mankind. The *Eternité/Ciel* pairing of book 1 may have its counterpart in the sublunar *Philosophie/France* pairing of book 2: France is seen as the most perfect place in the sublunar world. Equally, the *Hymne de la Mort* acts as a good pivotal poem, dealing as it does with the theme of human expectations of happiness after death and the idea of a return to a spiritual homeland. However, links between the *Temple* and the *Hinne de Bacus*, and between the *Prière à la Fortune* and the *Hymne de l'Or* are less evident. The general pattern which emerges is as follows:



Beyond thematic considerations, Ronsard also bore in mind the question of the dedicatees. Book 1, although nominally dedicated to Marguerite de France, contains four poems (if we include the *Commendatrix epistola*) devoted to the cardinal de Lorraine; book 2 has three poems devoted to Odet de Coligny, cardinal de Châtillon, and one to his brother, Gaspard de Coligny. Tact clearly required that the rival families be separated.

The second collective edition of Ronsard's works appeared in

<sup>5</sup> See the discussion of this hymn in chap. 5.

1567, with the hymns occupying volume 4 of the six volumes. By then, the seasonal hymns had been published, and this led Ronsard to rearrange the poems. Book 1, however, is identical in its *dispositio* to the 1560 edition, leaving the circular structure in place. Book 2 also retains the same order of poems, but three hymns (the *Hymne de l'Or*, the *Hinne de Bacus*, and the *Hymne de France*) are removed, leading to a more balanced arrangement between the first two books, but with little evidence of symmetry in book 2.

Book 1		Book 2
<i>Eternité</i>	↔	<i>Philosophie</i>
<i>Henry II</i>	↔	<i>Temple</i>
<i>Calais et Zetes</i>	↔	<i>Pollux et Castor</i>
		<i>Fortune</i>
<i>Justice</i>	↔	<i>Mort</i>
<i>Daimons</i>	↔	<i>Hercule Chrestien</i>
<i>Cardinal de Lorraine/Suyte</i>		
<i>Ciel</i>		

Book 3 contains the four seasonal hymns, in their original order, and book 4 balances this with four hymns: the *Hymne de l'Or*, the *Hinne de Bacus*, the *Hymne à la Nuit*, and the *Hymne de France*. Ronsard seems to have arranged these two books to correspond with one another in a similar way to the first two books, with, I would suggest, the following pattern:

Book 3	<i>Printemps</i>	
	<i>Esté</i>	
	<i>Autonne</i>	
	<i>Hyver</i>	
Book 4	<i>Or</i>	
	<i>Bacus</i>	
	<i>Nuit</i>	
	<i>France</i>	

In this arrangement, the introductory *Hymne du Printemps*, which deals with the birth of the seasons, is balanced by the final poem of book 4, where we see the beneficial effect of the seasons on the earthly paradise which is France. The *Hymne de l'Esté* then forms an obvious pair with the *Hymne de l'Or*, both because of the links between gold and the golden rays of the sun, and also because of the theme of

productiveness and fertility apparent in both poems. The *Hymne de l'Autonne* and the *Hinne de Bacus* form an entirely traditional pair, as do the *Hymne de l'Hyver* and the *Hymne à la Nuit*, in that in either case, Ronsard views the hymns' subjects as preparing the way for fertility and abundance. The importance of night, sleep, and sexual desire in the *Hymne de l'Hyver* has already been underlined,<sup>6</sup> and these are precisely the themes of the *Hymne à la Nuit*.

This arrangement of the hymns would continue with the 1571 and the 1572/3 collective editions of Ronsard. 1578 sees the next change, with the hymns being reorganized into two books once again (volume 5 in the seven-volume edition), but only after four poems had been removed. Both the *Temple* and the *Prière à la Fortune*, which had been dedicated to Odet de Coligny, were suppressed, although it is no doubt a tribute to Ronsard's sense of loyalty that the first three poems of book 2, dedicated to Odet and Gaspard de Coligny, continued to be included long after the Saint Bartholomew Massacre. The other two poems to disappear were the early *Hymne à la Nuit* and the *Hymne de France*. There is one new addition: the *Hymne sur la victoire obtenue à Moncontour*.

The concern for balance which so clearly characterized the early editions appears to be somewhat diminished in 1578. Book 1 follows the order of all previous opening books since 1560, except that the addition of the *Hymne des Astres* (restored after being omitted in all previous collective editions) and of the *Hymne sur la victoire* throws off the balance at the end. Book 2 shows a greater concern for symmetry, with the four seasonal hymns being balanced by three hymns on either side, and Ronsard moves the *Hymne de la Mort* to final position to act as a weighty metaphysical balance to the *Hymne de la Philosophie*, maintained in first position in the book. There is also a numerical balance between the two books of poems, which each contain ten hymns, a number associated with ideal perfection and the harmony of the spheres, being the *tetractys*, the sum of the the first four numbers ( $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10$ ).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See the discussion of the *Hymne de l'Hyver* in chap. 7.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Buffière, *Les Mythes d'Homère*, 557ff., and especially 579–82. According to the lecture notes on the *Odyssey* preserved in Milan, Dorat shared this view about the number 10: "Nam cum littera X decem significet qui numerus omnium est perfectissimus ..." (fol. 17').

This principle of placing important metaphysical works in prominent positions is extended in the 1584 collection, with Ronsard ensuring that the first and final poems of each of the two books deal with important matters: *l'Eternité* and *Les Estoilles* in book 1, *la Philosophie* and *la Mort* again in book 2. Once more, the four seasonal hymns occupy the central position in book 2. In both the 1578 and the 1584 editions, there appears to be a conscious decision to avoid exact balance between books 1 and 2 in the opening poems, most obviously in the case of the two mythological hymns. In 1578, the *Hymne de Calaïs, et de Zetes* is in the third position in book 1 with the *Hymne de Pollux, et de Castor* in second position in book 2; in 1584, the *Hymne de Calaïs, et de Zetes* is in second position with the *Hymne de Pollux, et de Castor* in third. The difficulties of achieving total symmetry have perhaps led to a decision to move away from balance rather than having an only partial symmetry. Perhaps too the effects of the Wars of Religion on Ronsard led to a less optimistic attitude towards the possibility of inducing celestial harmony in human affairs.

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As with the visual arts, the question of the intended audience and the extent to which that audience would have appreciated both the content and the structure of the *Hymnes* must be raised. It should be clear from earlier remarks that Ronsard, having alerted his readers to the concept of the *fabuleux manteau*, expected those who were sufficiently enlightened to pierce through his fictional creations to discover the inner truths which they contained. It must be equally clear that, even amongst his contemporaries, this enlightened group would have been small: the commentaries and explanations of his poetry during and shortly after his lifetime bear witness to that. Even more difficult to appreciate are the organizational principles at work in the hymns, and Ronsard does not go out of his way to alert us to that aspect of his writing. Nevertheless, it is something to which he attached considerable importance.

We are drawn to the conclusion that Ronsard intended his poetry to be appreciated on a number of different levels, that aesthetic pleasure was possible without full intellectual understanding, and that the underlying structural harmony of the poems was there, like the



structure of a piece of music or a building, to guarantee the integrity of the compositions, perhaps to induce a corresponding feeling of harmony in the reader, in line with Neo-Platonic thinking. At least part of his work's prestige must derive from its hermetic quality.

Ronsard's *Hymnes*, like the work of the mannerist artists of his day, have passed in and out of fashion since his death. However, despite the greater initial impact of his rivals in the plastic arts, the poet has to a large extent been vindicated in his claims for the greater immortalizing effects of poetry. Since Ronsard's genius lies in the written word, the pictures which he has created have truly fared better than many of the fading, crumbling frescoes which inspired him.



## *Appendix 1*

# Fontainebleau: Galerie François I<sup>er</sup>

## La Nymphe de Fontainebleau

Le Sacrifice		L'Éléphant royal		Les Jumeaux de Catane		La Vengeance de Nauplios		L'Éducation d' Achille		Vénus frustrée	
S	S	P	P	S	S	S	S	P	P	S	S
P		s		P		P		s		P	
VII		VI		V		III		II		I	
					N ^ 						
s	S	P	P	S	s	S	s	P	P	s	S
S											
L'Ignorance chassée		L'Unité de l'état		Cléobis et Biton		La Mort d'Adonis		La Jeunesse perdue		Centaures et Lapithe	

Danaé

S = stucco volet P = painted volet  
s = stucco cartouche p = painted cartouche



## *Appendix 2*

# Editions of the *Hymnes*

1555	1556	1560	1563	1567/1571/1572/3	1578	1584
<u>Henry II</u> <u>Justice</u> <u>Temple</u> <u>Philosophie</u> <u>Fortune</u> <u>Daimons</u> <u>Ciel</u> <u>Astres</u> <u>Mort</u> <u>Or</u> <u>Hercule Chrestien</u>	<u>Eternité</u> <u>Calais &amp; Zetes</u> <u>Pollux &amp; Castor</u>	1 <u>Eternité</u> <u>Henry II</u> <u>Calais &amp; Zetes</u> <u>Justice</u> <u>Daimons</u> <u>Charles de Lorraine</u> <u>Soyte</u> <u>Ciel</u> <u>Soyte</u> <u>Ciel</u> <u>Philosophie</u> <u>Temple</u> <u>Pollux &amp; Castor</u> <u>Fortune</u> <u>Mort</u> <u>Or</u> <u>Hercule Chrestien</u> <u>Bacus</u> <u>France</u>	1 <u>Printemps</u> <u>Esté</u> <u>Autonne</u> <u>Hyver</u>	1 <u>Eternité</u> <u>Henry II</u> <u>Calais &amp; Zetes</u> <u>Daimons</u> <u>Charles de Lorraine</u> <u>Soyte</u> <u>Ciel</u> <u>Philosophie</u> <u>Temple</u> <u>Pollux &amp; Castor</u> <u>Fortune</u> <u>Mort</u> <u>Hercule Chrestien</u> <u>Printemps</u> <u>Esté</u> <u>Autonne</u> <u>Hyver</u> <u>Or</u> <u>Bacus</u> <u>Nuit</u> <u>France</u>	1 <u>Eternité</u> <u>Henry II</u> <u>Calais &amp; Zetes</u> <u>Justice</u> <u>Daimons</u> <u>Charles de Lorraine</u> <u>Soyte</u> <u>Ciel</u> <u>Astres</u> <u>Hymne sur la victoire</u> <u>Philosophie</u> <u>Pollux &amp; Castor</u> <u>Hercule Chrestien</u> <u>Printemps</u> <u>Esté</u> <u>Autonne</u> <u>Hyver</u> <u>Or</u> <u>Bacchus</u> <u>Mort</u>	1 <u>Eternité</u> <u>Calais &amp; Zetes</u> <u>Henry II</u> <u>Justice</u> <u>Daimons</u> <u>Charles de Lorraine</u> <u>Ciel</u> <u>Henry III</u> <u>(= H. sur la victoire)</u> <u>Estoilles</u> <u>Philosophie</u> <u>Hercule Chrestien</u> <u>Pollux &amp; Castor</u> <u>Printemps</u> <u>Esté</u> <u>Autonne</u> <u>Hyver</u> <u>Or</u> <u>Bacchus</u> <u>Mort</u>

An underlined title indicates the first appearance of a hymn in a hymn collection.

| indicates the last appearance of a hymn in a hymn collection.

<sup>1</sup> First published as a *plaquette* in 1559.

<sup>2</sup> First published as a *plaquette* in 1559.

<sup>3</sup> First published in the *Meslanges* in 1555.

<sup>4</sup> First published as a *plaquette* with two other poems in 1549.

<sup>5</sup> First published in the *Quatre premiers livres des Odes* in 1550.

<sup>6</sup> First published in the *Sixième livre des Poèmes* in 1569.

<sup>7</sup> First published as a *plaquette* in 1575.

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The order of the texts is that in which they appear in the Laumonier edition of Ronsard. Wherever possible, the title is given, followed by the opening line and Laumonier reference (Volume and page numbers), followed by page references to the present volume.

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*Au lecteur* (I. 59n), 56

*A son lict*, "Lict, que le fer industrieus" (I. 257-9), 5, 58, 66-69

*Des peintures contenues dedans un tableau*, "Tableau, que l'éternelle gloire" (I. 259-64), 5, 32-38, 48, 58, 69, 70, 71, 94, 145, 268, 291, 293

*Hinne à Saint Gervaise, et Protaise*, "La victorieuse couronne" (II. 5-7), 118

*Hinne à la Nuit*, "Nuit, des amours ministre & sergente fidele" (II. 21-22), 118, 119, 301

*La Defloration de Lede*, "Le cruel amour vainqueur" (II. 67-79), 105, 224, 291, 293

*Le Ravissement de Cephale*, "L'iver, lors que la nuit lente" (II. 133-47), 105, 273, 293

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*Hymne triumphal sur le trepas de Marguerite de Valois*, "Qui r'enforcera ma voix?" (III. 54-78), 118

*Ode à Michel de l'Hospital*, "Errant par les champs de la Grace" (III. 118-63), 21-23, 27

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9 "Le plus toffu d'un solitaire boys" (IV. 13-14), 3

*De Posidippe, sur l'image du Tems*, "Qui, & d'où est l'ouvrier? Du Mans. Son nom? le Conte" (V. 90-91), 62-64

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*Harangue que fit monseigneur le duc de Guise aus soudards de Mez*, "Quand ce brave Empereur qui se donne en songeant" (V. 203-19), 70-76

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8 "Morfée, s'il te plaist de me représenter" (VI. 52-53), 38-40, 68-69

*L'Élégie à Janet peintre du Roi*, "Pein moi, Janet, pein moi je te supplie" (VI. 152-60), 3

*Hinne de Bacus*, "Que sauroi-je mieus faire en ce tems de vandanges" (VI. 176-90), 111, 118, 119-26, 265, 270, 294, 301

*Hymne de Treschrestien Roy de France Henry II de ce nom*, "Muses, quand nous voudrons les louenges chanter" (VIII. 5-46), 7, 60, 128-29, 131, 139-47, 201, 239, 290, 298

*Hymne de la Justice*, "Un plus sçavant que moy, & plus chery des Cieux" (VIII. 47-72), 132, 153-58, 163, 174, 197, 298

*Le Temple de messeigneurs le Connestable, et des Chastillons*, "Je veux, mon Mecenas, te bastir, à l'exemple" (VIII. 72-84), 65, 129, 132, 163-67, 175, 183, 191, 298, 301

*Hymne de la Philosophie*, "Si quelquefois Cleio m'a decouvert" (VIII. 85-102), 133, 175-83, 184, 250, 270, 298, 301

*Priere à la Fortune*, "J'ay pour jamais, par serment, faict un vœu" (VIII. 103-14), 97-98, 134-35, 188-91, 197, 301

*Les Daimons*, "Quand de jour et de nuict je repense à par moy" (VIII. 115-39), 22, 131, 136-39, 141, 143-44, 176, 250, 298

*Hymne du Ciel*, "Morel, qui dans le cœur divinement possedes" (VIII. 140-49), 128, 134-36, 188, 191-97, 298

*Hymne des Astres*, "C'est trop long temps, Mellin, demeuré sur la terre" (VIII. 150-61), 133-34, 175, 183-88, 283, 284

*Hymne de la Mort*, "On ne scauroit, Paschal, desormais inventer" (VIII. 161-79), 96-97, 133, 163, 167-73, 190, 270, 299, 301

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